

**CIRCLE OF CONCERNED
AFRICAN WOMEN
THEOLOGIAN**

EXECUTIVE MINUTES



**KEMPTON PARK CONFERENCE CENTRE
SOUTH AFRICA**

10TH - 11TH JULY 2005

**Circle Executive Meeting
Kempton Park Conference Centre, South Africa
10th July 2005**

Minutes

1. Opening Prayer

Sarojini opened in prayer.

2. Welcome

Isabel welcomed everyone who was present: Dorcas, Hélène, Isabel and Sarojini (minute secretary).

3. Apologies

Felicidade sent apologies. Hélène reported that Felicidade gave her a mandate to speak on behalf of the Lusophone Circle.

4. Adoption of the Agenda

All in agreement.

5. Confirmation of Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes accepted as a true record of the meeting held on 12/10/03.

6. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

6.1. Constitution

It was noted that the constitution has been drafted.

6.2. Circle Directory

Beverley Haddad is updating the Circle directory. H  l  ne raised the question of circle directories being updated – that is whether it needs to still be in print or electronically or how feasible it is financially. Isabel reminded the committee that the updating of the directory is in the Circle Action plan.

A discussion was also held regarding how to obtain updated information regarding circle members. It was decided that the regional coordinators will be in touch with the chapter coordinators in order to obtain the most recent updated information. The regional coordinators need to send this updated information to Beverley Haddad.

Dorcas also raised the question of what defines a circle member. It was decided that only women who research, write and publish in accordance with the circle vision can be circle members. Isabel reminded the group of the circle’s vision and mission.

6.3. Circle Website

The website is only updated annually, because it is proving to be expensive. It was last updated in February 2005. It will be updated again in 2006. H  l  ne raised the question of the multi-linguistic nature of the Circle. She said that this is not reflected on the website. Isabel agreed that she will speak to the web-designers about adding the two other languages besides English. H  l  ne also raised the question of having more regular updates than annually. However, Isabel pointed out that this would be rather expensive.

6.4. Circle Administration

It was noted that Lilian Siwila continues to do circle administration on a graduate assistant basis. It was also noted that Comilla Laban has been employed for R 2000.00 a year to prepare Circle financial statements.

7. Circle Coordinators Workload

Isabel pointed out that the responsibilities of the Regional and General Coordinators need to be revisited as she felt that not everyone had been doing what they were mandated to do.

7.1. Mandates for Regional/Linguistic Coordinators

Refer to Newsletter no. 1 April 2003. Isabel says that she is doing what the linguistic Coordinators should be doing, for example, Isabel reported that many Francophone women were writing to ask questions regarding the conferences. H  l  ne reported that she is not ready to hold a conference. She thinks that it is more important to focus on the pending books from the Addis conference. H  l  ne said that people were not showing interest. That is why the Francophone regional conference was cancelled, besides the funding.

Isabel was suggesting that nobody in the Anglophone was ready either. But, one has to push.

Isabel explained that the organization and chairing of regional conferences was the responsibility of regional coordinators. Dorcas apologised for her minimal input into the organisation of this Regional Conference.

8. Circle 2002 Pan African Conference Publications

8.1. West Africa Publication

Dorcas reported that the publication is not ready, because there were several mistakes in the final manuscript which she is still attending to. It will be ready by September.

8.2. East Africa Publication

This manuscript was sent to Cluster Publications, but Cluster rejected it because it was of poor quality. Since December 2004 it has been with Theresia Hinga.

8.3. Francophone Publication

Hélène reported that the money for publishing has not been received for publishing. The manuscript is ready, but they are awaiting funds. Isabel said that she will check with Carol Meyer at the University of KwaZulu Natal to find out what is holding up the money transfer. It will take six months after the funding has been received before the book comes out. The name of the book is *Femmes Africaines et VIH et SIDA: Non, Plus de larmes! Sous la direction de Helene Yinda et Marie-Bernadette Mbuy Beya* (Yaounde: Sherpa).

8.4. Lusophone Publication

Isabel gave the Lusophone Circle as an example of where she is doing the work of the Linguistic Coordinator. They asked Isabel to come and mentor them, which she did. She did this on several occasions, but up to today, despite the purchase of a computer, they have not written anything. She said that even though they were not academics she asked them to write sermons and prayers. And yet they have not even done that. They have now said that they want to start an orphan project, but Isabel says that this is not part of the vision of the Circle.

Hélène suggested that we need to understand and empower them. Isabel pointed out that the Circle had already done this. Hélène also proposed that she will try to incorporate those in the Lusophone Circle with the Francophone Circle so that they can mentor them.

Isabel also reported that she only learnt what the Circle in Angola is doing in America, because they were fundraising there. Isabel also confirmed that she agreed with them that they can write in Portuguese not in English. She also said that the mentoring method is now exhausted. They cannot go further.

Isabel again encouraged the coordinators to ensure that they are fulfilling their mandates. Hélène reported that she is doing much more than what she is mandated to do, for example she has been translating Circle newsletters from English to French. She completed editing the 2002 Francophone papers.

It was concluded that for the Lusophone Circle that those who can speak English can go to the Anglophone meetings and those who can speak French go to Francophone meetings so that they can be mentored. However, they are mandated to finish the sermons and liturgies project because it has already been paid for by the Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa through Dr Sue Parry.

9. Gender and Theology Handbooks

9.1. Francophone

Hélène reported that she had started working on the curriculum through E-mail. They also held a conference, after which Hélène had the responsibility to put things together. Hélène has sent it to various countries to test the curriculum; she has received very positive feedback even though the process is incomplete. Hélène thought that before the final curriculum is published it would be important to speak to the theological institutions through conferences and workshops so that it can be thoroughly revised.

9.2. Anglophone

Isabel reported that the curriculum was tested at the University of KwaZulu Natal. They have received feedback and Musa and Isabel are yet to look into it.

10. On Being Church

The papers have been collected and edited and some of them have been published in the Journal for Constructive Theology. We are to publish all the well-revised papers in a book before 2006.

11. Women and Health

The English papers for this book have gone through strenuous editing. The standards of Orbis Books are very high. The quality of Circle publications needs to be rigorous and more academic. Dorcas apologised for the poor communication on the editing of the book. She assured everyone that she contributed her edited work, which unfortunately did not reach Isabel and Sarojini. It was noted that Isabel and Sarojini were the final editors of this book, which is already with Orbis.

Hélène reported that the quality of the French papers was not good and only very few contributed.

Due to time constraints the meeting closed at 22h00. It was agreed that it would continue on 11 July 2005.

Meeting continued 11 July 2005.

12. Circle Newsletter

Hélène reported that she had received a number of submissions for the Circle Newsletter. So far, she has at least thirteen pages. The Newsletter has the theme: “Violence against Women” and Hélène has already written an editorial. It also contains two articles from Nyambura. One is a reflection on her experiences at Cameroon when she visited the theological institutions there. She has also submitted an article on the Tamar Campaign. Esther Mombo Mary Maribie and Rosemary Amenga Etogo each submitted a piece on violence against women. There are also reports from Circle Chapters from Madagascar and Nigeria. There are a number of achievements that are also being celebrated. In addition there are the regular features of the mission and vision of the Circle, and a message from the Coordinator’s desk. Dorcas to provide a report on the Regional Conference held in honor of Mercy Amba Oduyoye.

13. Circle Profiles

The Circle profiles are not complete because members have not sent in the relevant information. It was agreed that Circle Chapter Coordinators would put pressure on members.

We also need the profiles from the Francophone Circle. Hélène agreed to send these to the Circle office in French.

14. Circle Bibliographies

Lilian is working on the bibliographies, and as with the profiles this is also lacking the French contribution.

15. Circle 2005 Regional Conferences

It was agreed that it was not financially feasible to have separate regional conferences, and even when it was agreed that there should be a combined one, papers were not forthcoming.

16. Finances

Isabel presented the un-audited financial report. She reported that the financial status of the Circle is very bad at the moment. She needs help with fundraising, because the Circle is in the red. The current Conference budget is as follows:

INCOME		
Catholic for Pro choice	US\$	500.00
UPCN	US\$	5000.00
LWF	US\$	5000.00
Women’s Day of Prayer (Germany)	€	1500.00

CIRA	US\$	3000.00
EWM	€	16000.00
Sister to Sister	US\$	1300.00

CONFERENCE EXPENDITURE		
Air tickets	US\$	18000.00
Accommodation	US\$	10000.00
Stationary	US\$	200.00
Postages	US\$	300.00
Local transport	US\$	500.00

TOTAL	US\$	29000.00
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This budget does not leave any funding for the pending publications for 2005, newsletters and stationary, website or administration costs of the Circle.

Isabel also presented the un-audited 2004 Circle Financial Statement, which were as follows:

	ZA Rands	ZA Rands	ZA Rands
INCOME			
Balance brought forward from year 2003	00.00	182,436.34	(182,436.34)
World Council of Churches	211,926.71	211,926.71	00.00
University of Basel	25,125.63	25,125.63	00.00
Yale University	98,132.80	98,132.80	00.00
Interest	00.00	10,485.42	(10,485.42)
TOTAL	335,185.14	528,106.90	(192,921.76)

EXPENSES			
Admin Officer	183,000.00	1,999.60	181,000.40
Stationery, Postage, Telephone etc	00.00	29,386.72	(29,386.72)
Regional Administration	15,000.00	98,710.68	(83,710.68)
Travel Expenses for the General Coordinator	15,000.00	6,992.40	8,007.60
Audit Costs	12,000.00	00.00	12,000.00
Newsletter (English, French and Portuguese)	42,000.00	21,341.50	20,658.50
Publications	72,000.00	71,530.18	469.82
AMKA	30,000.00	00.00	30,000.00
Website Design	33,000.00	9,028.80	23,971.20
2004 Directory Production	15,000.00	00.00	15,000.00
Workshop - Engendering T Education	00.00	72,266.50	(72,266.50)
Office Equipment	00.00	1,695.00	(1,695.00)
Dorothy N Ucheaga Grant	00.00	46,480.00	(46,480.00)
Anne Nasimiyu Grant	00.00	46,480.00	(46,480.00)
TOTAL	417,000.00	405,911.38	11,088.62

BALANCE	-81,814.86	122,195.52	-204,010.38
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The 2004 exchange rate was South African Rand 6.00 to \$1.

17. Constitution

Dorcas and H  l  ne both had reservations about discussing the constitution in a large forum without the executive having discussed it first. H  l  ne proposed that the bigger group can discuss the constitution but that the changes will only be made later as a draft. Isabel said that this should be a long process so that by 2007 the constitution will be finalised. H  l  ne brought up the issue of whether the Circle moves from being a movement to a formal organisation. Isabel pointed out that this issue has already been decided so the constitution needs to be framed by the notion that the Circle is an organisation. There will be a long process of drafting and re-drafting so that people have time to make their comments, and that the executive can critically listen to everyone's comments.

The original drafts will be sent to the Anglophone Circle (by Dorcas), the Francophone (by H  l  ne in French) and the Lusophone (by Felicidade in Portuguese). Isabel will revise the first draft constitution as per the discussion at the Regional Anglophone Conference, including H  l  ne's comments. The Linguistic Coordinators will compile the comments; send the first draft back to the members for approval before sending the final compiled comments to Isabel by 31 December 2005. The three drafts will also be circulated among the executive. Isabel will then work on the final draft once she has received the comments from the various Linguistic Regional Coordinators and send approval back to them by 31 March 2006.

18. Partnerships

Yale University Isabel reported that the next two Circle members who will participate in the CIRA initiative will be Dorcas and Hazel. Constance, Isabel and Therese will report on their time at Yale in the November newsletter.

H  l  ne queried the process for choosing participants for the CIRA project. Isabel said that since no one had applied for the project as advertised in the newsletter, they had to eventually nominate women. Applications need to come in early to allow enough time for processing as the duration of the programme is between August and May. The November 2005 Circle newsletter should carry the advert.

19. Population Services International

The Circle applied for funding for research but was turned down together with many other organisations.

20. Population Council

They have proposed a research partnership with the Circle concerning child marriages.

21. WCC

Isabel reported that the Circle continues to have a good relationship with WCC through Aruna and Nyambura, though they have not been able to fund the Circle in 2005.

22. Updates on each linguistic group

22.1. Anglophone

Refer to attached report.

22.2. Lusophone

Refer to attached report.

22.3. Francophone

Refer to attached report.

23. Circle 2007 Conference

23.1. Theme

Possible theme: The Girl Child, African Women, Religion and HIV/AIDS

Sub themes:

- Child marriages
- Heterosexual relationships
- Overcoming violence against women and the girl child
- Cultural practices
- Sexuality and rape
- Religious and theological responses
- Interventions
- HIV in the disabled communities
- Cross generational relationships and the spread of HIV
- HIV/AIDS among religious leaders
- Disclosure, stigma and discrimination
- Theological institutions and HIV/AIDS
- Faith Based Organisations and HIV prevention

23.2. Venue

Isabel apologised for mentioning Mozambique as the chosen venue. It was decided that Cameroon will be the venue, as agreed upon at the 2002 meeting.

23.3. Budget

Hélène suggested that any incoming funds should go straight to the accommodation venue. Registration fees of US\$ 25.00 Visa and local transport need to be covered by individuals. All the funds will be transferred to YWCA Cameroon who will be the local organisers. The conference will be for 120 people. Hélène will be in contact with the YWCA to see whether they can help with the coordination of the conference. If the YWCA Cameroon accepts, Hélène will send Isabel an approximation of costs for accommodation and travel. Based on those projections Isabel will draw up a budget and a proposal.

23.4. Planning Committee

The Executive, plus the YWCA in Cameroon.

23.5. Fundraising

Isabel reported on the fundraising situation. She reported that the chief funder, EMW refuses to fund a combined Pan-African conference. WCC and the Methodist funders may also agree to provide US\$ 10, 000 each. It was suggested that funding could be sought from the Church of Sweden, Dan Church Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, Ford Foundation, Presbyterian Church USA, and USAID. Pauline Muchina would like to be a part of a fundraising committee. In addition to her, Nyambura, Mercy, Musimbi, Aruna and the Executive will form the fundraising committee.

23.6. Date

The date for the Conference is set for the first week of September, to arrive on Sunday and depart on Saturday.

24. Any Other Business

The draft 2004 annual report to be sent to the Regional Coordinators for input and comment before it is circulated to the donors. Isabel will also send the audited report as soon as it is ready.

25. Closure

Hélène closed the meeting in prayer.

APPENDIX ONE



RESEARCH COORDINATOR'S REPORTS

ANGLOPHONE COORDINATOR'S REPORT

In the first newsletter of the Circle, the Research Coordinators assignments were stated as follows:

- i. maintain communication within the linguistic circle;
- ii. liaise with the Chief Coordinator;
- iii. mentor writing within the linguistic Circle;
- iv. promote the vision of the Circle and welcome new members;
- v. liaise with Circle Chapters;
- vi. Assist in updating database, website and dissemination of information to members and their Chapters.

In the light of the above, I have opened an E-mail address for the Anglophone Chapter <<Circletheologians@yahoo.com>> this incorporates the addresses of all registered members as reflected in the Circle's directory. This has assisted in getting information to members about the book in honour of the pillar of the Circle, Mercy Oduyoye and the call for paper for this conference. However, I want to state that though I am supposed to organise this workshop, the burden fell on the General Co-Coordinator, Isabel Phiri, Sarojini Nadar, Fulata Moyo and Lilian Siwala. This was due to the fact that most of the time they were physically together, thus enhancing easier and better communication. My input was limited as I was incapacitated by the erratic power supply in Nigeria, which made it difficult for me to exchange mails as expected.

Circle Members Profile and Biography

The call for members profile and annotated biography was also made. However, the responses had not been encouraging. I, therefore, solicit your support on this by asking you to send this to me as soon as possible and inform other Circle members to follow suit.

Welcoming New Members

In an attempt to welcome new members, some male colleagues who support the vision of the Circle have been supplying names of women who have the necessary qualification to be members of the Circle. Recently, two such women completed their research work. Their names with the titles of their thesis have been mailed to the Francophone Coordinator for inclusion in the forthcoming Newsletter. Helen, Ruth and myself, while in Ghana this year

agreed to invite another Muslim Colleague, whom we believe is not conservative to join the Circle. This will be done as soon as we arrive in Nigeria.

Problems encountered

The major problem hindering effective communication is that of bouncing E-mails. I want to implore us to check our addresses as indicated in the attendance list for this Conference and supply the necessary corrections. If there are any changes of address, kindly inform us.

I want to conclude by stating that I much appreciate the efforts of the local organising committee, including Isabel Phiri, Fulata Moyo, Lilian Siwala and Sarojini Nadar, and all of us here present for responding to the call for papers in honour of Mama Mercy and for attending this workshop.

Thanks and remain blessed.

Dorcas Akintunde
Anglophone Coordinator

LUSOPHONE REPORT

Hélène Yinda was mandated to report on the Lusophone Circle.

- i. They have a number of challenges in the Lusophone Circle.
- ii. The Lusophone Circle has a very basic knowledge regarding theology and academic writing. As a result therefore they cannot do research, write or publish.
- iii. Helene said that the challenge that remains is to find out how these women can be empowered to write.
- iv. Secondly, they want to move beyond the vision of the circle to write and want to undertake practical work in the community, such as HIV/AIDS work with orphans and vulnerable children.

FRANCOPHONE REPORT

By way of introduction, Hélène Yinda spoke about her work with the YWCA. She said that the main priority of the YWCA is the issue of HIV/AIDS. She is also working with the conflict situation in Palestine, and the introduction of Palestinian liberation theology.

- In the Francophone area there is no such thing as Women's Studies or Religious Studies at Universities. Students only go to Seminaries, where the church has control. Some members of the Circle even need permission from the churches to attend Circle

meetings. However, they are good theologians because they have a rigorous theological programme.

- Many women did not have PhDs. Now there are at least five.
- Two books are pending from Francophone. They are presently with the publisher.
- The Francophone Circle has worked on the engendering theological curriculum, both through e-mail and a workshop. They have sent the curriculum to various theological institutions to test, and the process is still underway. The curriculum was designed for churches and communities, more than the academy.
- They are also working on a *festschrift* for Mercy Oduyoye, which will be ready in 2006.
- Helene reported that she felt that it was a waste of time and money to have a Francophone Conference because the quality of papers which she received was not good. She would rather that papers are well-developed before they are presented at a conference. Her vision is to build capacity in the Francophone Circle.
- Helene has also been translating the Circle newsletters into French. She reported that this was difficult and beyond the scope of her duties. She has also been fundraising.