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**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FOR LEADERSHIP POSITION WITHIN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
CAMEROON: A MISSIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION**

2011

By

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BY

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(B.Th, B.Th Hons)

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTERS OF THEOLOGY (MINISTERIAL STUDIES) IN THE
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PIETERMARITZBURG.**

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NOVEMBER 2011

DECLARATION

I declare that.....

“ Women’s Empowerment for Leadership Position within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: Missiological Exploration” unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been clearly indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Atem Gladys Ekone
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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to explore the ways in which PCC's missional engagement with *Agenda PCC 2000 programme* has effectively facilitated the empowerment of women for leadership. Under girded with a missiological framework, the exploration draws on insights from the concept of the Mission of God (*Missio Dei*) and the resulting understanding of humanity created in the image of God (*Imago-Dei*) and *Koinonia* that are used to analyze issues of mission, leadership and partnership. African Feminist pastoral theory and Feminist cultural hermeneutics are applied as theories to further guide the study. The study argues that man and woman are created with equal dignity and they both represent God's purpose on earth. In the light of this theological understanding the study calls into question the PCC exclusion of women from senior leadership role within its ecclesial community.

The research question of this study is: What are the experiences of women being empowered for leadership within PCC since the launch of the *Agenda PCC 2000 programme*? The methodology of the study followed a "mixed method approach" that involves collecting and analyzing more than one form of data in a single study as a design in addressing complex questions in an interdisciplinary research. The process of data analysis involved making sense of the empirical and non-empirical data to ascertain and understand the meaning of the data obtained through interviews. Through textual criticism and discussion with women sharing their experiences on empowerment and leadership positioning, revealed that some women are included in leadership positions but they are alienated by the patriarchal ecclesial power structures of the PCC.

If the PCC is to be effective in its missional and ecclesial endeavours' it needs to embrace a theology of partnership of women and men in leadership structures of the church. The study asserted that if equal space and equity are given to both men and women to participate in decision-making, then fresh approaches to leadership and understanding of mission will be opened. The study concluded that the PCC can do much more in balancing the gender gap if it follows the Trinitarian model of leadership by restructuring its male dominating pattern of leadership that permeates its administrative structures.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to God the giver and sustainer of life. In God I found favour above my human imagination. To him be the glory, honour and adoration Great things He has done.

ABBREVIATIONS

BFTW	Bread for the World
BM	Basel Missionaries
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CIG	Common Initiative Groups
CMF	Christian Men Fellowship
CWF	Christian Women Fellowship
EBM	English Baptist Missionaries
FEMEC	Federation of Protestant Churches in Cameroon
MTC	Marriage Training Centre
NGO	None Governmental Organisation
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
PGSST	Presbyterian Girls' Secondary School Of Science and Technology
PHMC	Presbyterian Home Making Centre
PTS	Presbyterian Theological Seminary
UNO	United Nation Organisation
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRC	World Communion of Reform Churches
WEEP	Women Education and Empowerment Programme
WTTC	Women Teachers Training Collage
WWD	Women's Work Department

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

Cameroonian women like their counterparts worldwide suffer from economic powerlessness, less educational opportunities and negative socio-cultural perceptions. These adverse conditions are not only present within the society but are embedded within the church as well. Over the years one has heard women and feminist activists advocating for equality of women and men as a means of attaining an egalitarian society and the will of God for humanity. In seeking to address this apparent marginalization of women there is need for every church to re-examine its theology and structures that might have led to this precarious situation of women. This study therefore offers a missiological¹ exploration of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)² and its “Agenda 2000 and Beyond”³ programme on the empowerment of women in leadership position. David Bosch (1991) speaks of the church’s mission as one rooted in the doctrine of *Missio-Dei*, “God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world, announcing of Good News as well as a call for Christian participation in the human society, including working for human wellbeing and justice”(Bosch1991:390). The church is viewed as an instrument for that mission addressing the particular needs of the society in context thereby “bringing the kingdom of God into existence” (1991: 424). This study is therefore under-girded with an understanding of the church’s mission as one that is rooted in context; it is the experiences of the women in the PCC who are on the margins of ecclesial power that shape the thrust of this Missiological exploration. Therefore, amongst the issues discussed within this study, this chapter outlines the background, location of study, motivation and identification of research question, preliminary literature review, research question and objectives, theoretical framework, methodology and research design and the structure of the dissertation.

¹ Missiology’s task in this project will be to investigate scientifically and critically the presuppositions, motives, structures, methods, patterns of cooperation, and leadership which the churches bring to their mandates (Verkuyf 1978:5).

² Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) is the historical and constitutional successor of the Basel Mission church in Cameroon established in Cameroon in 1886 as an external arm of the Evangelical Missionary Society of Basel (Basel Mission) in Switzerland (PCC Constitution 1998:1). PCC is one of the largest protestant churches in Cameroon with about 1.000,000 adherents (2010 PCC Daily Bible readings and diary pg 75).

³ It is an action plan that is supposed to guide the PCC in its policy formation from grass roots to the highest courts of the church (Nyasako-Ni-Nku 1999: Preface).

1.1 Background, Motivation and Identification of Research Problem

This study has been deeply influenced by the researcher's personal and professional journey as a female pastor within the PCC for the past ten years. The PCC *Book of Orders* preamble states: "that man and woman were created equal. Consequently, they should be given equal opportunities to develop their potentialities to the fullest and to serve God with all their talents in any capacity" (1995:31). This statement seems to confirm that PCC advocates gender equality. However my engagement and experience in ministry and mission has exposed me to glaring contradictions that exist within PCC's policy documents on gender and the veracity of its practices.

The gender and power challenges faced by PCC are also reflected in a more concentrated way within the wider Cameroonian society. In key institutions such as the Parliament, government ministerial appointments, etc the presence of women is very limited⁴. The need for good governance within the Cameroonian society calls for the deepening of democracy and transparency at every level within the society. This necessitates that the PCC should not be found wanting in its own system of governance that can be accused of discriminating against women. Bold and imaginative steps are needed to implement its vision of having a just community of women and men sharing equal rights and opportunities in leadership.

PCC developed in 1999 the document: "*Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond. What kind of a church do you want?*" The aim was to provide the church with a strategic plan for its ministry and mission beyond the year 2000. In the consultation of clergy and lay leaders, the focus groups discussed a wide range of issues for the advancement of the church. They included gender issues and made several recommendations that called for equal opportunities in employment and appointments of both men and women in leadership position. It also recommended an action plan for gender sensitivity (Nku 1999: 35-38). The PCC adopted the recommendations approved by the consultation and affirmed its commitment to facilitate gender justice within its faith community.

However, the following ecclesial realities confirm that there are entrenched contra forces that are present preventing the realization of those goals: Firstly, Agenda 2000 plan of action called for the inclusion of courses on gender at the church's Theological Seminary as well as the running of short courses in parishes but the recommendation has not been followed. Secondly, the data on leadership in the Presbyteries re-enforces the depth of the challenge that PCC faces. Of the twenty-

⁴ In Cameroon very few women are appointed to government administrative positions. The years 2010/11 saw ten regions in which there are no female governors and few female parliamentarians and ministers.

five (25) Presbyteries that make up its ecclesial system of governance none is headed by a woman. Within its post primary institutions (educational ministry) a similar crisis exists. Of the 19 owned schools only 3 are headed by women (PCC Daily Readings and Dairy 2011:71-73). The data seems to suggest that gender equality advocated for in PCC's documents constitutes a distant dream rather than a reality.

This study also argues that women empowerment involves the capacity to claim and grasp opportunities to question and restructure patriarchal decision making structures to become enlightened and responsive to the real and felt needs of women. It is therefore necessary to review the empowerment model that the Basel Missionaries bequeathed to the PCC. Beer (2007:194) argues that missionaries were children of their own epoch and as such reproduced in their organisation and work the patriarchy characteristics of the society. Their attitude to women reflected the perspectives of their era.

In the contemporary context the PCC constitutes a modern ecclesial institution that embraces ecumenical standards on gender justice within its faith community. Its membership in regional and international bodies⁵ requires commitment to practicing gender justice. In response to the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the PCC embraced the goals of the movement and even assigned an officer to hold the church accountable to the objectives⁶. To ask the church to be in solidarity with women, Oduyoye (1990:45-46) argues is “to ask for identification with the hopes and fears women live by and with, in church and society...to live and witness in such a way as to demonstrate that its interest are those of the whole community”. Therefore, if women are to experience empowerment within PCC the challenge cannot be restricted to simply writing and approving policies in gender justice. The Achilles heel lies much deeper within PCC's mal- formed and deeply embedded missional identity that prevents women from experiencing fullness of life (cf John 10:10).

The focus of this study therefore is to explore the ways in which PCC's missional engagement with *Agenda PCC 2000 programme* has effectively facilitated the empowerment of women for

⁵ These include the World Council of Churches (WCC), World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the All Africa Council of Churches (AACC)

⁶ Mwaura (1998:28) make reference on the report on the World Council of Churches (WCC) mid- decade (Ecumenical decade of churches in solidarity with women) team visit (1994) Observed that women all over the world are the pillars of the church and the majority in most congregations.

leadership. For a church to be true to its missional purpose it must take practical steps to remove the barriers that prevents women, from participating fully within the highest level of leadership.

1.2 Preliminary Literature Review and Location of the Research

The Agenda PCC 2000 document constitutes the primary literature that informed this study. However, since the document is informed by PCC's missional and ecclesial identity selective writings related to the disciplines of missiology, and ecclesiology has been used to give shape to the study. I have also drawn upon key writers of African feminist pastoral discourse as the hermeneutical lens through which the assessment was made of the effectiveness of the PCC in empowering women for leadership. The thrust of this study is based on the Mission of God –*Missio Dei*, setting the agenda for the Church mission. Secondly, it is the missional identity of the church that shapes its ecclesiological forms and structures. Finally, the church's mission is carried out in context shaped by patriarchal power dynamics; therefore a feminist pastoral critique is necessary to facilitate the just empowerment of women for leadership.

1.2.1 Discourse on the Missio-Dei and Missio-ecclesia

Of the vast literature available on the *Missio-Dei* this study has limited its scope to the writings of Bosch, Oduyoye, Kretzschma, Phiri, Kanyoro, Luzbetak and Pretorius. They represent key African voices who are advocating for the renewal and transformation of the church to meet the challenges of the context.

The missiologist, David Bosch (1991:390) states that “In the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God...mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission”. Similarly Scherer affirms that “in its mission, the church witness to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participate in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil” (Scherer 1987:84 in Bosch 1991:391). The ecumenical perspective of the *Missio-Dei* affirms that “mission and church go together, so that ‘the church lives by mission as a fire exists by burning’ ...In the strict sense, the sending God alone, through the sent-God, is the sending authority” (Emil Brunner in Lossky et al 1991:688).

The call to mission begins with baptism which is a sign of incorporation into the Christian family. Gittins (1993:7) affirms “baptism is a sufficient prerequisite for mission and every baptised person becomes part of the people of God, the church”. It is however regrettable that even with this

missional understanding and calling of all baptized persons, the role of women in exercising strategic positions of leadership is missing within the church in Africa. If this understanding means inclusiveness and equal dignity to all who are created in the image of God (*imago dei*⁷) then the totality of who God is, cannot be represented by a single gender. The image of God as a community of being, as represented in the Trinity, can only be represented in human community of female and male, living and working together in unity (Peacock 2010:24; Adrian 1993:109).

The ecclesiological nature of the church that shapes its faith and order takes its true identity from its missional calling. Pretorius (1987:5) argues mission involves the whole life of the church... How should the church live in the world? What should the church be in order to bring the good news to the world? He further states that “to be the witness of Jesus means not only preaching and words, but also deeds-deeds of mercy and compassion, deeds of justice-and the example of a new humanity in which love and unity reigns” (1987:8).

Mission calls for a renewed society free of exploitation and oppression, a new community of women and men in partnership, true availability to others, and sincere readiness to transformation and sensitive response to the real needs of others (Campbell 1991 :80; Oduyoye 1995; Luzbetak 1996:127; Russell 2001:48). From an African point of view for a person to have a sense of belonging means that “you have a say in what is happening around you, you are involved in the discussions that involve you and the community, your capabilities are recognised and utilised for the good of the community. You are made to feel wanted and you are given a place where you belong” (Phiri 1997:12).

The Church’s mission is a call for each individual created in the image of God to fulfil that divine calling. Beer (2007:192) argues that, if the mission of the church is to mirror the relationships within the triune God, then gender justice becomes an issue of mission. In an effort to find the place of what mission has to do with women, Kretschma (1995:147) opines that “in as much as mission includes evangelism, Christians would do well to ask whether women find in church as an institution attractive or repulsive. Further if salvation has primarily to do with God rather than the church, how do those who preach the gospel to others themselves experience and portray God?” According to Kretschma, mission has to do with the wider function of the church within itself and

⁷ Both male and female represent God’s image meaning they both form the basis of the *imago-dei* as recorded in the creation narratives found in Gen 1:27.

within the society. The Good News of Jesus Christ will not make any meaning if the churches that bear the mark of Christ continue to oppress and marginalise women within its rank (147).

1.2.2 Discourse on Women Empowerment in leadership position

The literature on feminist pastoral discourse was used to engage the works of Mwaura, Oduyoye, Kanyoro and Phiri as principal African voices along with Beer and Miller-McLemore in the critique of patriarchal power within the ministry and mission of the PCC. The reality of empowerment is all about acquiring and maintaining one's space, recognising others and not encroaching into forbidden zones. Miller-McLemore (1999: 80) disputes that "empowerment involves advocacy and tenderness on behalf of the vulnerable, giving resources and means to those previously stripped of authority, voice and power". If women are therefore to envisage any form of empowerment, then the leadership of the church needs to create comfortable space for women to exercise their God given talents within the mission and ministry of the church.

Beer (2007) see women empowerment as a difficult concept to discuss within the church because it is based on the idea of hierarchical positioning which is absent in the Triune God. In a patriarchal society like Cameroon, power is attributed to men by virtue of their biological sex. Therefore, talking about empowerment will mean reducing the power of men and giving it to women. To make men more active and less passive participants in issues of this nature Beer prefers to use 'gender justice' in addressing women's marginalisation within a patriarchal structured society. She therefore replaces the term empowerment with gender justice because it allows us to discuss the question of power sharing from a different perspective. Whether the issue of women marginalisation is termed gender justice or empowerment, the objective is about making space for women to participate fully in the ministry and mission of the church. Both terms convey the same expectation of having the community of men and women serving as mutual partners and not competitors for power and influence because each gender is "made in the image of God" (cf Gen: 1: 27).

Using the Kenyan example of the role of the church in the empowerment of women, Mwaura (1998) acknowledges that society and church are patriarchally structured. Women are still relegated to "inferior status in economic, political, social, intellectual and religious spheres. Their numbers have not been reflected in leadership positions and high level decision making processes and governance whether in church or society" (1998:28). She argues that the church should respond to the current plight of women economically, socially, politically and spiritually. The services of the

church have to be extended to all and it should openly challenge the structures that hinder women from attaining the equal dignity as was at creation. Similarly Phiri (1997) in her work on *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy* focuses on cultural hindrances especially patriarchy as a major setback of women in assuming leadership positions in the church and society.

Awa in her book *The Third Millennium Cameroonian Woman* (2004:12) is convinced that most women suppress themselves and are ignorant of their rights and the potentials they possess. She further disputes that the inalienable rights are meant for all human beings. Women need neither liberation movements nor the constant request for granting of their rights by society. Familiarising themselves with these rights, which were bestowed on them at creation, is what women need (2004:12). In her view women need to claim, utilize, maintain, promote and defend their rights for themselves as well as for other human beings. Awa seems to forget that Cameroon is like any African country where leadership has predominantly been male-dominated, much needs to be done in the area of empowering women to access leadership role.

There is very little literature that is available that critiques in terms of content, context and method, the PCC document: *Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond: What kind of church do you want?* Therefore this study seeks to fill that void through its missiological exploration of the empowerment of women for accessing leadership position within the church. As a minister of the PCC, I conducted this study as an insider which carries the risk of compromising on objectivity in the gathering of data. However, my insider's insight has been used positively to identify and access dormant and hidden resources.

1.3 Research key question and Objectives

The central motive of this study is to explore the mission of the PCC in the empowerment of women in leadership positions in the church. As such the key question that shaped the thrust of this study focused on: What are the experiences of women being empowered for leadership within PCC since the launch of the *Agenda PCC 2000 programme*? To answer this question other sub-questions were used to shape and propel the study. First, how do the women experience the theology that informs the mission of PCC in equipping women in leadership positions in the church? Second, what extent has PCC empowered women to access leadership roles? Third, how are women sustaining their empowerment in the church? And fourth, what are the new images or motifs that could be used in developing a balanced leadership between women and men in PCC

In view of the above mentioned problem statement, the objectives of the study are as follows: Firstly, is to analyse the experiences of women in the light of Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond Programme and PCC's perspective and practice of mission. Secondly, to investigate the role played by women in leadership position in the church. Thirdly, to assessed how women have sustained already acquired leadership positions within the structures of PCC's leadership so as to gain credibility and confidence. And fourthly, is to contribute to the awareness of a gendered conscious Church.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Explorations of the role of women in the church made use of feminist theoretical framework. However, this study employs an interdisciplinary approach that is under girded by a Missiological framework that embraces perspectives grounded in the *Missio-Dei* concept. The foundations provide the door through which the questions of partnership in mission, issues of social justice and the church as a community that lives the life of Christ are explored (Oduyoye 2001 and Phiri 2010:452). The traditional view of women within patriarchal Cameroonian society as second class human beings can be analysed using gender theories that advocate for the church to be a discipleship of equals⁸. In addition to the *Missio-Dei* concept the study is also interfaced by an African feminist pastoral theory and cultural hermeneutics. 1. The *Missio Dei* with its emphases on mission as God's own activity invites the church to participate. In the *Missio-Dei* understanding, humanity is created in the image of God, not man and it is God who sets the agenda for the church's mission (*Missio-Ecclesia*) in the world. It therefore requires a community of women and men in partnership that embodies equal rights and justice. 2. The feminist pastoral theory is suspicious of patriarchal power and will be used to analyse the power structures and relationships which exist within PCC. 3. The lens of African feminist cultural hermeneutics will also be employed to contextualise the study. Each of these will now be examined in greater detail.

1.4.1 The *Missio-Dei* concept

Bosch (1991:389) attest that mission has undergone decisive shifts for the past decades from an understanding of mission as saving souls, expanding church to understanding mission as God's mission. While acknowledging the existence of so many distinct and isolated theories of mission:

⁸ Isabel Phiri, Sarogini Nadar, *On Being Church: African women's Voices and Visions*, Geneva: World Council of Churches. Pp146-156 and Susan Rakoczy 2004, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology* chapter six.

evangelisation, quest for justice, and contextualisation, just to mention a few, which are all intimately interrelated, this study focused more on mission as *Missio-Dei* as a theory which Bosch (1991:391); Peacock (2010:22) proposed as God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate.

Within the concept of *Missio-Dei* perspectives on the *imago-Die* and *Koinonia* have been utilized. *Imago-Dei* emphasizes that humanity is created in the image of God, and offers a model of collective leadership in which all the three persons in Trinity are seen to exist harmoniously, not in a hierarchical or oppressive structure but in inclusiveness and mutuality. *Koinonia*,⁹ as postulated by Peacock (2010), seeks to advocate for partnership as an alternative model to hierarchical relationships in gender relations. He further argues that, "The basis of *Koinonia* is the common fellowship (*Koinonia*) that we share in Jesus Christ (1 John 1:6-7)...and the model of our communion with each other (2010:40)".

1.4.2 African feminist cultural hermeneutics

The study followed the perspectives of Oduyoye (2001) and Kanyoro (2002) who have argued that both the African and the Bible cultures are patriarchal and this has been used as a tool to oppress women. Feminist cultural hermeneutics therefore seeks to critically analyse a variety of issues, highlighting the oppressive elements of both the Bible and African culture while reclaiming and retaining the liberative elements in both African culture and Biblical traditions. Although culture forms our identity, African Women theologians have stated that not everything in our culture enhances human life. African feminist hermeneutics like other feminists theologies uses the experiences of women as its point of departure. Though the experiences of women in the PCC may differ from those of other African countries, women in general share common burdens.

These theories serve as the lens through which a critical examination of the experiences of women in PCC will be explored.

1.5 Research Design and Methodology

This study followed a "mixed method approach" methodology. This is a methodology that involves collecting and analysing more than one form of data in a single study as a design in addressing

⁹ *Koinonia* is a Greek word for fellowship, sharing or sharing in common. Fiorenza proposed that it should be translated as shared partnership or commitment (Peacock 2010:39). This study has equally adopted to use it as shared partnership between women and men.

complex questions in an interdisciplinary research (Creswell and Clark 2007:6-9 and Creswell 2003:15). The study is primarily a qualitative study(multi-method in focus) which recognizes “the world” as the locus of complex interpretive processes within which human beings struggle to make sense of their experiences including their experiences of God (Swinton and Mowat 2006:29-30). This approach also conducted limited interviews with selective female and male leaders of the church. Mixed method approach was therefore used in collecting and combining recorded data (narratives-based data from the field) and textual documents.

1.5.1 Textual Documents

The *Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond programme* is a comprehensive document that covers a wide agenda within the PCC. The PCC Archives and library in Buea was consulted for primary source materials. Other documents used in the study included: PCC diaries, constitution, Book of Order, other gender policy documents and minutes of various Synods. However, it was not the purpose of this study to critique the PCC as a missional organization but to assess its missional and ecclesial proclamation vis-à-vis the experiences of women in accessing leadership positions. Therefore, focus attention was given primarily to those sections of the *Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond* text that speaks to the empowerment of women. This text was critiqued in conjunction with other literatures on the church’s mission and the empowerment of women in leadership. My literature review focused on relevant library information from published and unpublished materials, documentaries from organisations like World Council of Churches (WCC), All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and internet sources. In this regard I made extensive use of the library of University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) and its cluster libraries.¹⁰

1.5.2 Empirical data

Additional data was gathered from selective interviews. The people interviewed were chosen based on their capacity to provide relevant information on the experiences of women in accessing leadership positions within PCC since the launch of the Agenda 2000. The categories of persons considered as key informants in this process has been explained in detail in chapter five which reports the field work done.

¹⁰ Cluster Libraries consulted were: Evangelical Seminary of SA (ESSA), Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI), St Joseph Institute of SA and EG Malherbe library-Howard College.

Data collection was a mixture of informal and formal conversation. Thus it was based on one question leading to another depending on my understanding of the situation. Secondly I applied non-standardized approach with open-end questions as seen in appendix 2. This was done following the structure and objectives of the research.

1.5.3 Data analysis and interpretation

The process of data analysis involved making sense of the empirical and non-empirical data to ascertain and understand the meaning of the data obtained through interviews. This involved careful listening to the audio tapes recorded during the interview with an intention of correlating it with what the Agenda PCC 2000 programme proposes for the empowerment of women to leadership and the experiences of women. I made use of the feminist pastoral theory and African feminists' cultural hermeneutics as tools for analysis.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation and Conclusion

Chapter one provides a general introduction to the study. It presents an overview of the study stating the background and motivation of the study, the research's key question and the sub questions, theoretical framework and methodology used in developing the study. Chapter two focuses on Women's experiences in empowerment during the era of the Foreign Mission administration of PCC to ascertain its effectiveness. In chapter three the study examines the activities of PCC and the Empowerment of Women in Leadership to discover whether there was an improvement in the empowerment of women in strategic leadership positions.

In chapter four, the focus shifts from a chronological mapping of the empowerment journey of women during the colonial and missionary era and PCC's missional engagement to an exploration of Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond programme. The fifth chapter presents and analyses data to determine appropriate implications of the critique of PCC gender policies. Chapter six advocates the construction of a just community of women and men as partners in leadership in PCC based on the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the WCC co-published manual *on Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership (2010)*. Chapter seven concludes the study with an overview of the chapters and raising questions and concerns for further research. Having laid out the perimeters and stated the problem which this study seeks to address, I shall now commence with the exploration of PCC's missional engagement in the empowerment of women into leadership positions.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN EMPOWERMENT DURING THE ERA OF THE FOREIGN MISSION ADMINISTRATION OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON.

2. Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was observed that the PCC women are on the margins of ecclesial power and as such their experiences form the thrust of this study. As the constitutional successor of the BMS, it is therefore important to examine what was bequeathed to the PCC that shaped its missional understanding on the empowerment of women. This chapter examines the early missionary encounter in Cameroon beginning with the English Baptist missionary society (EBM)¹¹ and the Basel Missionary Society (BMS) with much emphasis on the empowerment of women. However missionary activities in Cameroon cannot be examined without an exploration of its relationship to the system of colonialism. The colonial state could not function effectively without the skills and services that the foreign missionary community brought into the local context. Joseph (1980:5) confirms this perspective by arguing that,

The foreign missionaries were servants of God but they were also handmaidens of the traders and colonial administrators. Their converts among Africans themselves became children of God or Allah, but also leaders of their people and often defenders of the latter's unwillingness to renounce some of their customs for the sake of redemption.

2.1 European Colonial and Missionary Presence in Cameroon.

The European encounter and colonial regime in Cameroon can be divided into three stages: The Portuguese (1472-1807), The Germans (1884- 1916) and The British and the French (1916-1961). Joseph (1980:10) observed that each colonial stage was mirrored by different missionary engagement with similar policies on the empowerment of local women. Le Vine (1971:2) states that, the Portuguese who (assumed to be circa 1472) were the first Europeans to reach the Cameroon coast, visited the Island of Fernando Po and sailed to the Wouri River Estuary near the site of modern Douala. The early Portuguese explorers renamed the river 'Rio dos Camaroes' meaning Rivers of Prawns because of the food it provided them. The Portuguese name was later applied to the coastal area and eventually became the country's name. The Portuguese activities in

¹¹ The English Baptist Missionaries were the first missionary society that came to Cameroon (Joseph 1980:6 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/218370>. Accessed on April 26th, 2011.

Cameroon were centred on the commoditisation of human beings. Africans were captured, sold and transported to the Americas where they were again sold and enslaved to be used as labourers on plantations. It can be inferred that this large exodus led to the destruction of family structures which contributed to women headed household, insecurity and a decrease in labour force in Africa. As survivors, women had to sustain family in the midst of social death and depopulation of key labour force.

Following the British abolition of the “slave trade” in 1807 the Portuguese commercial influence declined in Cameroon. The Germans gained the upper hand and under the patronage of Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck Cameroon was annexed in 1884 (Le Vine 1971:7; Ngoh 1996:58). The German Protectorate lasted 32 years 1884-1916. After World War 1 that resulted in the defeat of the Germans (1916) Kamerun came under the colonial rule of Britain and France.¹² The different colonial presence in Cameroon also shaped the missionary development as outlined in the next paragraph.

The evangelical missionary presence in Cameroon can be traced to African Baptist missionaries from the Diaspora. In 1834 Alfred Saker, Pastor Joseph Merrick and Alexander Fuller with his two sons from Jamaica, went to Cameroon under the auspices of the English Baptist Missionary Society (EBMS) (Joseph 1980:6). According to Keller (1997:6) Saker and his team worked relentlessly among the Bakweri’s and extended their work to Douala. It is worth mentioning that the secular impact of Merrick’s linguistic, educational and printing work and Saker’s continued efforts in these domains, enhanced communication with the local people, the English as well as other traders plying the coast. Besides the teaching of English language, the missionaries adopted the Duala¹³ language as a medium of communication which also played a vital role in their peaceful acceptance. The first printing press was brought to Cameroons by the Baptist Missionaries and Saker translated the Bible from English into Duala (Ngoh1996:88). Their activities came to an abrupt end due to the annexation of Cameroon by the Germans in 1884.

2.2. English Baptist and women Education and Empowerment

The English Baptist Missionaries (EBM) opened mission stations in Duala and Bimbia. With the opening of schools, the missionaries inculcated Western ‘civilising values’ to the Africans.

¹² Kamerun is the German spelling of Cameroon.

¹³ Duala is the language spoken by the coastal people found in the economic capital of Cameroon. It was taught and used as the language of communication during the Basel Missionary era in Cameroon.

Alluding to the relationship between the colonialists and the missionaries in Kenya, as was the case in many other African countries at that time, Kanogo (1993:166) argues that “colonial government and missionary vision for Africa converged on many issues including the need to introduce formal education, Western medicine and “better” methods of agricultural production”. One may therefore infer that although the colonial political leaders and the missionaries had differences in their specific social, professional location, personal experiences and sense of vocation, ultimately they shared a common objective and that was for their European culture to dominate and control the Africans through their dominant language and culture.

Awa (2007:22) opines that besides inculcating western cultures to the Africans, the missionary bodies introduced education with the intention of training future religious leaders (priest/pastors), as their main objective was to Christianise the colonies. “At that epoch boys were preferred over girls, as they could accompany the colonial masters in exploring the hinterlands for the acquisition of necessary raw material” (2007:22). She further states that girls faced many constraints, for instances, most parents thought that the majority of the girls would get married as soon as they left the mission schools. Failure to invest in the educational development of girls was due primarily to the local cultural understanding that it was uneconomical to do so because soon after their education, girls would marry and become part of a new family and/or tribe and their family would lose their economic investment. Therefore, the educational development of girls had less to do with gender issues and much more to do with factors of economics and power.

Another reason advanced for the disparity in educational attainment of boys over girls was that, schools were few and far apart which demanded long distance travel. This was seen as a tedious journey for young girls to get involved. Therefore, very few girls went to school. The first known literate woman in the English sector of Cameroon was Dorothy Effange. She attended the English colonial primary school in 1922 in Buea and later became a pupil teacher by 1930(Awa 2007:23).

Furthermore, prior to the coming of the foreign missionaries in Cameroon, the traditional civil society had mixed attitude towards women as leaders within the community. Women were primarily co-leaders within the home offering care to their children and husbands. The public domain of leadership was predominantly the domain of male Elders. This was the norm except in matrilineal societies where women inherited property and some played the role of spiritual mediums and civil leaders (Aji-Mvo 1995:45). According to Bowie (1993:18) missionaries treated male and female converts differently, according to their own understanding of proper male and

female roles. They encountered societies which also distinguished in various ways between the sexes and work either to reinforce or to undermine these categories. “The missionaries viewed girl education as secondary. They were keen primarily to inculcate ideas relating to cleanliness, proper housekeeping and general aptitude in house craft, including sewing, cooking and child bearing” (Kanogo1993:180).

These perspectives suggest that the kind of education that was given to females was to prepare them as good housewives according to western ideology and not for public leadership roles. Adrian (1993:109) summaries it as follows: “a largely male-dominated missionary church encountered a largely male- dominated traditional Africa. Two forms of patriarchy appeared to fit together well enough”. She further states that even where African customs were matrilineal, missionaries could be bewildered and attacked this like so many other aspects of customs as opposed to the law of God. The marginalization of women and or the non recognition of their contribution are very evident in the way history is written. Ngoh (1996) for instance, in writing the history of Cameroon and missionary activities, makes no mention of the role played by women or the names of women who accompanied the husbands in doing mission work yet they worked alongside their husbands in educating the local women. This is equally evident in the work of Keller on the History of Presbyterian church in Cameroon (1997).

2.3 Transition from English Baptist Missionary to Basel Mission.

Keller (1997:11) reports that with the annexation of Cameroon by the Germans in 1884, the English Baptists could not expand their work further due to the new political situation. Besides, the Germans insisted on the use of German Language as medium of communication and instruction in schools. This of course made things uncomfortable for the EBM; therefore, they thought it will be good for a German Protestant Mission organisation to take over work.

Ngoh 1996 postulates that the Basel Mission reluctantly accepted to take over the work began by the EBM on condition that the German administration guaranteed them a free scope for mission activities. This was agreed and negotiation on the handing over of the congregations and properties of the EBM to the Basel Mission¹⁴ was effected (Keller 1997:13).

¹⁴ The headquarters of the Basel Missionary society was in Switzerland and a German branch was at Stuttgart. (Ngoh 1998:88) Today this missionary society is known as Mission 21 with its headquarters in Basel.

2.4. The Basel Mission Activities in Cameroon and the Empowerment of Women

The Basel Missionary Society took over from the EBM in 1886 and became one of the prominent religious missions in Cameroon. Bowie (1993:1) in narrating her experiences in Cameroon attests to the fact that a missionary was a male noun; it denoted a male action and male spheres of service. This probably explains why most early missionaries who came to Cameroon focused their attention in the education of the boys while their wives remained in their homes looking after their children and keeping the house clean.

Ernst Gertrud (2001: 70) commented that “many of the wives of the missionaries who were teachers back home invited the young Cameroonian women and girls to their homes during the day for the teaching of crafts and sometimes they taught the women also how to read and write”. Awa (2007:21) commenting on the type of education given to girls during the missionary era states:

While boys were sent to school to be academically empowered, it was the tradition for girls to be groomed to acquire dexterity in skills that could enable them to become proficient in home making-fetching water and wood, engaging in farming and cooking. Their training was geared towards being good wives to their husbands.

To consolidate the work done by the wives of individual missionaries, the BMS developed a mission policy to send female unmarried missionaries to give women some training beside the general evangelisation through the gospel (Gana 2001:63). Ernst (2001:70) argued that the BMS was influenced by the events happening at that time in their home country where women fought for equal rights with men. Therefore, the BMS sent out Anni Murer and Else Bleher in 1936 as the first female missionaries to Cameroon.

After the First World War, the work of the BMS in Cameroon came to a brief halt. According to Keller (1997:56-57) the British authorities who took over the administration of Cameroon after the war allowed the Basel missionaries to return and continue working in the British sector of Cameroon, while the Paris Missionary Society (PMS) took over the work in French Cameroon. This explains why the BMS activities were concentrated in two geographical areas- the forest Zone (which today is known as the South West region) and the Grass field Zone (North West region) of Cameroon. Therefore, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon also concentrated its evangelistic activities in these two regions. However from the 1980's the PCC began to expand its evangelistic mission to other parts of Cameroon.

2.4.1 Forest Region

In the forest region the missionaries opened the first girl's boarding school in Bethel, near Victoria (now called Limbe) in 1927. The main aim of this school was to train the girls in orderliness, tidiness and moral. One may be compelled to question if the African girls and women were really un-orderly, untidy or immoral as projected by the missionaries? It can however be understood that Western Christian civilizing culture were under-girded by euro-centric value systems. Ernest (2001:71) observed that this was exactly the same aim why Home Economics had been introduced in schools for girls in Europe. The missionaries wanted to first train girls for their future tasks as Christian housewives, improve on the health of the population and feed the family better.

A similar experience is narrated by Kanogo (1993:182) in her article on "Mission impact on women in Colonial Kenya", where she postulate that girls career-oriented was towards less intrusive careers so that it did not threaten male aspiration. The teaching profession was a contested terrain. She goes further to quote a missionary saying "In order not to overlap or spoil the field for the men teachers, these girls might be trained to kindergarten work for the small children and for our schools to teach sewing, knitting, housecraft and simple nursing" (KNA CMS 1/382 quoted in Kanogo 1993:182).

However, all did not end in home economics class as there was increase demand for nurses and teachers as the Cameroonian population become more interested in education. The contextual need for trained profession proved to be an effective instrument for the female empowerment. As such, the emphasis and the type of education offered to girls and women changed from domestic skills to professional education. Awa (2007:38) opines that "the girls who were taught in these schools became the first literate females in Cameroon. While some became teachers and others got involved into other professions..."

Beside the formal education offered by mission schools, the female missionaries joined their male counterparts and went to the villages organising short courses for women and girls. The groups then registered with female missionaries as a Christian women's group called 'Ndola Bito' in Duala language which means "the love of women". This is what later became known in 1961 as the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) a name adopted at the independent Synod of the PCC (Eneme 1982:46).

2.4.2 Grass Field Region

The missionaries opened the first girl's school in Bali in the Grass Field in 1903. Like their counterparts in the Forest Region, the girls were taught basic skills such as house craft, child care, knitting, gardening and agriculture (Awa 2004:38). Being aware of the importance of farming which was the sole source of income for the family and the need for the women and girls not to forget about doing farm work, the missionaries taught the women and the girls for three days in the week and released them to accompany their families to the farms for the remaining days. Ernst (2001: 72) affirms that though the women were taught the same subjects as in the vernacular schools where most of the pupils were boys, gardening and farming were integrated into the school syllabus. Also they laid emphasis on religious knowledge, home economics and related subjects.

The outbreak of the Second World War affected the smooth functioning of these schools. However after the war, Ernst (2001:72) report that "Na Lina Weber opened up a new girl's school with two classes in Bafut together with a young teacher named Martin Mfobe Fusi. With the assistance from the British government the school developed into full primary school of 8 years". By this time the girls had been sensitized enough for learning. Therefore in a bid to encourage the education of the girls, in 1961 Na Lina Weber opened the Women Teachers Training College (WTTC) in Bafut, but it was later transferred to Mankon. In this school she groomed the Cameroonian girls and women in home management and moulding them adequately into future teachers (Awa 2004:40).

2.5 Transition from Basel Mission Society to PCC

The empowerment of women by the BMS in Cameroon took two dimensions: formal education (in the form of schools) and informal education (running of courses in the villages). Female missionaries were aware that not all females could attend formal school, so they resorted to organising short courses for women in the villages which lasted for about one to two weeks (Ernst 2001:72). The duration of the courses changed as the local people saw the importance of the training. Also it gave an excellent opportunity for women to meet each other, even from different ethnic groups and share their problems and joys. By 1936 Marie Walcher was appointed to run courses in the Forest Region while Miss Buhler took charge of the Grass Field Region (Keller 1997:120).

The result of such courses was the creation of women's work centre in Fotabe around Mamfe in the Forest Region and the opening of the Marriage Training Centre for girls in Bafut in the Grass Field

Region. From this humble beginning, the PCC has created a department for Women's Work, which caters for the education and the empowerment of women within the PCC and the community.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the colonial history and early missionary encounter in Cameroon with emphasis on the Basel missionary activities towards the empowerment of the Cameroonian women into leadership position. The aim of education by the missionaries during this era tilted towards implanting euro-centric social, political and religious values into African societies. This was meant to bring about a humanisation project that could facilitate their economic interest. I have also highlighted that missionaries, like the African traditional society demonstrated this view by educating the boys for career-oriented jobs while girls/women were instructed in housekeeping skills. It may be concluded that both the missionaries and the traditional African society empowerment of women hovered around improving women's domestic skills and not grooming them for leadership positions. However, the few women who had the opportunity to forge ahead became teachers and role models to other women. The next chapter focuses on the empowerment of women within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

CHAPTER THREE

SELF-RULE AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE PCC

3. Introduction

In chapter two I demonstrated that the contributions of the European missionaries during the colonial era to the empowerment of women were focused on giving limited leadership role to women. The quality of education was geared at producing good house wives and to a very limited extend, training leaders for specific church work as teachers and social workers. This chapter evaluates PCC empowerment of women. To achieve this goal, the first segment focuses on the activities carried on within the Women's Work Department (WWD) and Women Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP). The PCC is an active member of local, regional and international ecumenical organizations which have made the full participation of women in the ministry and mission of the church their priority. Therefore the second segment gives attention to issues raised during the WCC *Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women* and how the PCC responded to its decision to give priority to the theological education of women.

3.1 Women's Work Department and Its Organo-gram

The Women's Work Department (WWD) and the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) organisationally, developed from the work started by missionary wives and the female missionaries (Eneme, 1982:48). According to Gana (2001:63) in 1961 missionaries Maria Schlenker and Rose Mary Peter presented to the Synod of the independent Basel Mission Church (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon) by-laws to harmonies and coordinate the activities of the women. This was approved with the name of the movement being *Christian Women Fellowship* (CWF) as mentioned in chapter two. The aim of the WWD was:

...To educate the women and girls (of 18years upwards) to a clearer understanding of Christian faith and to serve Christ whole heartedly in the homes, congregations and community. This process of education is done through work done in the women's work institutions, CWF groups and other women in the congregations. It also tries to unite the Presbyterian women with other Christian women movements at home and abroad (CWF hand book 1994:5).

The work of the WWD has experienced tremendous growth over the years. From the two administrative offices that were started in 1957, the WWD expanded its programmes to other regions in the French speaking sector of Cameroon (East Mongo presbyteries). The WWD has

three regional offices and each office is headed by a regional secretary with support staff to coordinate the programmes within the regions. The National Secretary for Women's Work is the head of the Women's Work Department and is based at the national offices where she coordinates its work and ensures that it network with other Departments of the PCC, with other national Churches and ecumenical organizations within Cameroon and abroad (Gana: 2001:65).

3.2. Activities of the WWD through CWF

The WWD work is organised through groups at the various levels of the church: congregations, zones, presbyteries, regions and national. The composition of each group is diverse and brings together women and girls from different ethnic, socio-economic, linguistic and age backgrounds. This diverse composition of women groups constitutes an indispensable human resource investment within PCC. Their weekly programmes are designed around giving opportunity to women to share their wealth of knowledge and experiences. Generally the activities of the WWD through the CWF function as follows:

- At the Congregational level, the women take part in the fellowship of the Least Coin, an internationally coordinated prayer conducted once every month, and also in the celebration of the International World Day of Prayer (WDP), every first Friday of March. Zonal leaders also organize the celebration of WDP ecumenically with the Baptist, Catholic and Anglican women.
- Meetings and Conferences are held every year at all levels to assess the work done and for general education and training.
- The department produces material to create awareness on Gender and HIV/AIDS issues and links women in this regard to NGOs that train them on the general principles of women empowerment, and also empower them socially, economically and politically.
- The department plans, implements, monitors and evaluates (PIME) Projects. Also holds annual training workshops for Christian Leaders and Pastors' wives, follow up in-service training, attend seminars, symposia and liaise with other women associations, NGOs, other Departments of the Church, nationally and internationally (File No 228 PCC Archives Buea).

3.2.1 Achievements of WWD through CWF

The CWF has been in existence for 50 years and its impact through the activities of the WWD in the empowerment of women can be identified through the churches structures, communities and society. The WWD serves as ecclesial instrument through which women shape their policies and channel their ministry and mission visions, plans and recommendations through the Synod¹⁵. It advocates the interest of women and the need for the church to be pro-active in ensuring the implementation of just gender policies within its faith communities and the wider nation. Commenting on the WWD's work over the years Gana (2001:65) writes: "Thanks to the open

¹⁵ The Synod is the highest organ of the PCC where decisions regarding the well-being of the church are made. The Synod meets yearly and during such meetings the National secretary for WWD like other heads of departments and institutions reports on the activities and proposals from their area of jurisdictions.

minded policy of the PCC, women and girls have the opportunity to excel in all fields today. And the women and girls have taken up the challenge”.

Within the congregations women serve as leaders of the local CWF Movement and as Elders. In some congregations female Elders serve as Chair Persons of Congregational Board and this has led to an increase in the number of female representation and participation in the Presbyteries and Synod meetings that constitute the first and second courts of governance in the PCC. The policies made at these levels have allowed increased number of women to gain access to higher education and to prepare them for strategic leadership role within the church and society.

Presbyterian ecclesial policies during colonial era severely restricted the role that females could play in the governance of the church. There was strict division of labour along gender line with men given prominence in area leadership role that were considered to be powerful and strategic. However the work of the WWD over the years in empowering women and working in partnership with men of the church has exposed the inadequacy of the church policies that discriminate and disempowered women. Eneme (1982:53) with gratitude attests that it was through the efforts of the WWD that the department for Men’s work was formed in 1981 when they proposed at a Synodical consultation that a men’s group be created which will collaborate with the women’s groups in programmes leading to better family living.¹⁶ She further states that the women saw that working in partnership with men could lead to a better understanding and collaboration for the advancement of the work of the Kingdom (1982:54). Today, the two departments produce annually a study booklet guide consisting of Bible Studies, leadership, house craft, gender, HIV and AIDS and good governance, just to mention but a few.

The missional work of CWF and WWD went beyond meeting inner ecclesial needs and extending to those of the wider society. Gana (2001:66) commenting on the impact of CWF within the Cameroonian society argues that:

The movement has served as a role model to other churches that have come up with their own versions like the Baptist Women’s Union and the Catholic Women’s Associations. It has served as a model for the nation that copied the idea of forming a female political wing of its party (W.C.N.U) in order to mobilise women better.

The members were equipped with leadership skills and self-confidence to take up positions of responsibilities within their communities. Increased number of Cameroonian women have advanced their

¹⁶ The women thought that to bridge the gender gap it was necessary for women and men to study together so that they will put in practice what is taught to them in church by teaching it back at home to their children.

educational career and have taken on leadership roles as presidents of NGOs, social groups, councillors, mayors, parliamentarians, principals of schools, directors, lecturers in universities just to mention but a few (Gana 2001:69; Awa2007:41). They have also been empowered to become active advocates of basic human rights. Members engage in missional services such as visiting orphanages, prisons, leprosy settlements, handicap centres and organise special collections for the care of those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS (Gana 2001:68). The WWD served as a good nursery for PCC's launching and taking positive action during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women in 1988.

3.3 PCC and the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.

PCC is an evangelical and ecumenical ecclesial community. When the WCC launched *The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women* (1988 to 1998)¹⁷, the PCC signed on to its programme and objectives as a member church. This ecumenical decade emphasis was a follow up of the United Nation (UN) Decade for the Advancement of Women on the theme: Equality, Development and Peace, 1975-85¹⁸.

At the end of the UN Decade for women, the WCC central committee urged member churches to eliminate the teachings and practices that discriminate against women as a Christian responds to the forward-looking strategies adopted by the UN Decade and as a follow up of the community of women and men in the church study" (Lossky 1991:339).

Commenting on the urgency of WCC's immediate follow up of launching of Ecumenical Decade, Gana (1995:48-49) opines that findings from the questionnaire sent to various churches by the WCC Central committee meeting in 1987 observed that, the situation of women had not changed much; and that its impact on women especially women from the rural communities have not made any significant change. The following themes constituted the key areas of emphasis: Participation; Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation; Women doing Theology; Feminine Solidarity and Women Experiencing the Resurrection (1995:49).

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon embraced the mandate of *The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women* and appointed Mrs Catherine Muke Chofor from the WWD as the Motivator for the programme. Her mandate was to ensure that the objectives and activities of the Ecumenical Decade took roots in local faith communities throughout the nation. The following objectives were adopted by PCC:

¹⁷ It is a long frame-work for action in solidarity with women (Lossky Nicholas at el 1991:339).

¹⁸ One of the important objectives of the UN is to promote respect for human rights and to address fundamental human problems. Therefore it set aside a decade for the recognition of women issues as a way of promoting peace and justice in the world (Lossky, Nicholas at el.1991:1038).

- To empower women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and their church;
- To affirm- in shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality- the decisive contributions women are already making in churches and communities;
- To give visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation;
- To enable churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism and from teachings and practices that discriminate against women;
- To encourage churches to take action in solidarity with women (File number 1 in the office of the decade motivator 1989:3).

As the decade motivator, Mrs Chofor organised seminars and workshops with communities of men and women, sensitising them on issues of gender equality and the need for women to be empowered and recognised as having potentials that should be harnessed for the common good of the entire community. In addition, she gave lectures on key themes that were reproduced in the joint yearly publications of the Women's Work, Men's Work, Lay Training and Evangelism Departments. The notes were not only published but re-taught during leadership courses for Christian Women and Men Fellowship movements (CMF); (File no 1 on PCC and Ecumenical Decade activities 1989).

The women of the PCC adopted the Palm Tree as their symbol of Ecumenical Decade because it signified:

They are as productive as the palm tree. They want to flourish like the ever green palm tree that gives shelter in the dry and sunny day. The PCC women also need to draw more inspiration from Christ our chief shelter, in order to help our church grow through our counselling, concern and support for other sisters and brothers around us (file no 1 in the office of the Decade motivator 1989:3).

This palm tree symbol was mirrored in their expectations to participate fully in all areas of the life and work of the church, especially those areas that traditionally were deemed to be only for men.¹⁹ They approached their objective by first investing in conscientisation programme of their members through awareness building of the challenge that they faced. Recognition was given that the women and men of the church are co-workers and mutual partners in God's vineyard (File no 1 1989:4).

3.3.1 Achievements of the Ecumenical Decade within the PCC

At the end of the WCC Decade in 1998, leaders of CWF Movement of the PCC came together to evaluate the activities of the decade and plan for a way forward. This meeting took place in

¹⁹ The organs and administrative positions of the church include: Synod, presbyteries, congregations, and staff of Theological Seminary, more female clergies, accountants, and secretaries of committees, other departments, administrators and heads of institutions.

Bamenda in WWD and they put together a report. They identified and assessed the successes of the Ecumenical Decade in four major areas (Ecumenical Decade office archives Douala file number 2, 1998: 5). This study shall focus on two aspects:

3.3.1.1. In the Church

PCC opened its doors for more women to be trained as pastors. Before the launch of the Decade in 1988, the number of female pastors in training stood at 2 by 1998 the number rose to 18. I have identified three other areas of growth as follows:

- i) Increased participation of women in leading church services and preaching
- ii) Women now head many of the congregations of PCC as chairpersons and group leaders unlike before when they led only the CWF movement.
- iii) Working with men has been achieved through the CWF/CMF joint study booklet. Material on the decade has been included in the study booklet used by these two movements and this has greatly increased the understanding of the decade issues on equal participation in leadership by Christian men and women (Ecumenical Decade activities file no 2, 1998:4-5).

3.3.1.2. Solidarity among Women Themselves and Among Women and Men

The evaluation of the Ecumenical Decade has also revealed that the focus has resulted in greater partnership among women and between women and men. This is highlighted in the following points:

- i) Men are beginning to see the need to live and work together with women at home, church and society. Some men now assist their wives in house chores and farm work in areas where farming was solely a woman's affair.
- ii) There is growing awareness on the need to treat the widows with care and the importance of a WILL which help to avoid intrusion and confusion in the family at the death of the husbands. In most Cameroonian cultures women were not allowed to inherit their late husband's property because women were viewed as property to the man and his family.
- iii) Women can now vote for fellow women to assume position of responsibility without making a mockery of her as usurping a man's place. This is very evident in church eldership which was formally seen as a position meant for men not women (File number 2, 1998:5-6).

The PCC's experience of the Ecumenical Decade is also mirrored in other reports as confirmed by Oduyoye (1990:60) in her midterm evaluation of the decade. She stated that several World Confessional Organisations and Churches have taken significant steps in the promotion of the Decade's agenda. A case in point was the creation of new structures and commission for women with its own board and staff by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to assist the whole church in addressing sexism and advocating justice for women".

Despite the numerous achievements mentioned above, women still face, ecclesial marginalisation within the PCC's structure. This will be discussed in the chapter five where women will share their experiences during and after the Decade. The end of Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity

with Women did not draw to a close PCC's desire towards the empowerment of women. As a way forward, PCC established another avenue for bridging the gap of gender inequality by opening its doors to Women's Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP) in 2005 which will be the focus of the next section.

3.4 Women's Education and the Empowerment of Women Programme (WEEP)

WEEP is a project of the PCC, jointly implemented with Nkong Hill Top -Common Initiative Group (CIG), a local Civil Society Organisation, in Buea. This office is hosted in the PCC Synod office building in Buea, South West Region. This empowerment programme within the PCC started in 2005 with Fako division as pioneer project area (Smiling women 2009:1). The programme was introduced after the launch of *Agenda 2000 and beyond Programme* to enhance and complement the church's engagement in issues of gender within its faith community²⁰ because the predominant patriarchal system does not provide adequate chance for women to be fully empowered²¹. Therefore, the activities of WEEP are designed to help the communities, especially women, to discover and recognise the talents and quality of power embedded in them.

3.4.1 Activities of WEEP

The activities of WEEP include: training trainers on gender issues, adult literacy for women, women's right, emphasis on girl child education, persuading chiefs to narrow gender gap, organises seminars on women's leadership and good governance, and round table conferences on capacity building for female counsellors and parliamentarians. The task of WEEP as an agent of transformation within the PCC is to educate and bridge gender gaps deeply rooted in the cultures of the Cameroonian communities.

Power can be understood as that which stimulate and instils self confidence in an individual. But it is rather unfortunate that women have been educated to belief that they are inferior to the men. Clifford (2005 :10) argues that "women are not inferior to men... it is rather women's inferior education and training that created the illusion of male superiority. If women were well taught as men, they would understand the subtleties of arts and sciences as well as men do". It is therefore important to re-educate the younger generation of women and men concerning the need to build wholesome partnership within an egalitarian society that reflects the following attributes:

²⁰ Rev Mary Kinge shared information in a conversation on June 21, 2011

²¹ This patriarchal power system promotes stereotyped gender roles for women

A society that embraces women, men, boys and girls as equal partners in development, equal partners to enjoy equal representation in decision- making structures, both formal and informal; and their voices in the formation of their policies affecting and impacting their societies on an equal platform or 'grounds levels'(Measuring gender gaps 2007 in Smiling women 2009:1).

This perspective falls in line with PCC's rationale in setting up a programme that will continuously educate the society in the need to improve the status of women within society. However, the activities of the programme have not yet reached parts of the country because of limited resources. Mary Kinge acknowledges that Bread for The World (BFTW) provides the project with essential resources. However this is not sufficient to facilitate expansion of the programme (Smiling women 2009:5).

3.4.2 Achievements of WEEP

The goal of WEEP is to increase women's participation in the development and decision- making processes so as to improve their status within the communities. In "Smiling Women", (a news letter by WEEP) some women shared their experiences on the knowledge gained through the programmes organised by WEEP. Mrs Fanny Ndivi, one of the several participants of WEEP seminar states:

I have benefited much from the WEEP empowerment programme. I was one of the many participants of the workshop on women's leadership and local governance. As president of CWF Buea, I now better understand how to deal with leadership matters. I learned management skills, public speaking at the workshop organised by WEEP (Mrs Fanny Ndivi, Head teacher/ Zonal president CWF Buea in Smiling Women 2008:7).

Another woman expressed the following on the issues of human rights:

I attended several of the seminars/workshops organised by WEEP. They have improved my knowledge of human rights issues. As a politician, I learned how to talk well in public; I have learned thanks to this project how to better manage my business. In fact, the training got from WEEP workshops changed me completely; I most thank Mrs. Kinge, WEEP coordinator for such wonderful initiative aimed at empowering women". (Mme Gladys Agbor, councillor-Idenau council reported in Smiling Women 2008:7).

The data presented in the "Smiling Women" (2008:7) publication state the following achievements of the WEEP project in local communities within the South West Region.

After its seminars, workshops and sensitization meetings the number of women's representation in church congregational group leadership rose from 63 to 134, making a 55.9% increase. Women's representation in traditional council rose from 14 to 24 persons, constituting a 44.3% increase. More 290 women started attending adult classes to add to 94, making a 74% increase.... In the political domain, 14 women were elected as municipal councillors and one more woman became a

parliamentarian to add to the existing one. Before the last municipal and parliamentary elections, a total of 775 women enrolled in the electoral registers through WEEP's intervention²².

3.5 Women in the Ordained Ministry:

Rev Dr Ruth Epting (ordained in 1947 in Basel) who was the first female lecturer at the Presbyterian Theological College Nyassoso in the South West Region motivated PCC to open the doors of the College for female theological education.²³ Her presence and brilliant performance as a lecturer is said to have amazed both her students and male colleagues (Gana 2001:64; Awa 2007: 50). According to Salle (2001:23) this was an eye opener to the PCC and the Cameroonian society. It however attracted a lot of criticism within and outside of the church. This, notwithstanding, PCC pursued its policy of gender justice in theological education and opened its doors for the training of female pastors in 1971. However, Armin (2001:89) alludes to the fact that it was only in 1987 that women started enrolling into theological education because of entrenched cultural construction of women's roles and embedded church teaching that linked theological education with ordination and employment of men.

The table below illustrates the number of student intake in the Presbyterian Theological College (Presbyterian Theological Seminary) from the year when women were first admitted (1987 - 2010).

YEAR	INTAKE	MALE	FEMALE
1987	13	11	2
1988	10	7	3
1989	19	16	3
1990	13	13	-
1991	-	-	-
1992	14	12	2
1993	13	12	1
1994	18	18	-
1995	13	11	2
1996	15	14	1

²² This data was an evaluation done by the staff of WEEP and the participating communities after the first phase of the project. The statistics are published in the annual magazine captioned 'smiling women'.

²³ The Seminary is now based in Kumba

Table 1

1997	16	14	2
1998	15	12	3
1999	15	12	3
2000	17	13	4
2001	15	10	5
2002	20	17	3
2003	22	16	6
2004	12	10	2
2005	12	9	3
2006	15	13	2
2007	21	17	4
2008	22	17	5
2009	22	17	5
2010	20	15	5
TOTAL	372	306	66

Source: Internal Archive of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kumba (file on entrance Examinations 1986-2010)

It is evidence from the above table that gender equality is not feasible within the PCC leadership positions given the fact that the intake into the Seminary is highly male dominated. What accounts for fewer women entering the Theological College is worth researching. Rev Martha Essem (1992:31) is of the opinion that though the Church (PCC) opened its door for women to be trained as ministers of the word, many of its Christians and even the Cameroonian society looked upon the women who did theological education to be not normal unlike the men. As such, a woman if married, her admission into the school of theology depends upon the husband's approval which is not the case with the men seeking permission from their wives. This cultural phenomenon is still practiced for married women who wish to peruse ministerial duties within the PCC.

Beer (2007:198) observed that:

In PCC, Women are spoken of as "women folk", which is rather pejorative; its objectives open the door to greater involvement of women in the church, but do not force anyone to really enter the house of gender justice. As a matter of fact, the church leadership is still male dominated. The female intake

in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary has been reducing continuously over the past years. So far non- Cameroonian female lecturer has been appointed to the Seminary²⁴.

Furthermore, an examination of the curriculum of the courses offered at the PTS up till 2002, revealed that gender studies do not feature (Armin 2002:158). As a former student of the institution I observed that whenever the course is offered occasionally it is not given as a core course but as an elective. In the years when the gender course was offered by the institution it was taught by a foreign ecumenical co-worker because it is not treated as a priority to attract the assignment of a local staff. This has raised questions whether this constitutes an oversight of what PCC advocates or is it really the absence of competent local staff to teach this subject? If gender issues become an optional subject in the premier institution where pastors are trained, what can one expect from the faith communities? Mukamakuza in her Master's thesis on the *Role of the Rwandan Presbyterian Church empowerment of Women* (2009:87) equally lamented on a similar situation of church's neglect on gender studies in the training of pastors. In her opinion, the consequences of this are the unremitting use of exclusive language in the church at the detriment of the women. Arguing on the necessity of women to be trained in theological education, Kanyoro (2001:13) affirms that "trained women will be able to challenge the text of the Bible by subjecting the hermeneutics of critical analysis to the biblical text.

3.6 Conclusion

The empowerment of women in the PCC has been a long route of struggle since it took over work from the Basel Mission in 1957. Its focus on women as the central axle of the family, demonstrated that the women folks in general have greatly exhibited skills and knowledge embedded in them by the creator. The increase membership of women into the CWF and the founding of similar organisations in other denominations is proof that PCC has served as a pace setter in Cameroon when it comes to issues of recognising the need for women and men to work together in partnership. However, the pace of change is slow and the numbers of women who are empowered are small.

Nevertheless, while PCC has excelled in providing programmes for the empowerment of women as sited in experiences narrated by women during WWD and WEEP workshops and seminars much is still needed to be done to bridge the gender gap within its administrative set up. An examination of its enrolment of Women theological students, absences of gender content of its theological

²⁴ There are two female Cameroonians lecturing in the PTS Kumba (2011)

curriculum and the number of women in senior positions of the church prove that PCC has not been consistent in its efforts to embrace women's contribution to the church. Chapter four will therefore explore gender policies of PCC, its objectives and achievements. This constitutes a critique on issues on Gender sensitivity found within Agenda PCC 2000 document and PCC's 2003 gender policy.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON AGENDA 2000 AND BEYOND POLICY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: A MISSIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION.

4. Introduction

The previous three chapters followed a chronological mapping of the empowerment journey of women in accessing leadership positions during the colonial and missionary era. An exploration was also made of the engagement of the PCC as an agent of social transformation for the empowerment of women in chapter three. Highlighting the process through which PCC undertook to improve the welfare of women in church and society through the activities organised by WWD, Ecumenical Decade motivator's programmes and WEEP as well as the training and ordination of women. The weaknesses of the PCC empowerment of women through the WWD and WEEP were equally critically examined.

The word 'empowerment' as used in this study, implies advocacy and tenderness on behalf of the vulnerable, giving resources especially to those previously stripped of authority, value and power, acquiring and maintaining one's space. Therefore, to know the extent to which PCC as God's missional instrument for transformation has advocated for the weak, this chapter will look into its gender policies and lift up the experiences of women in taking up leadership positions within the church. This chapter focuses on the exploration of '*Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond*' consultation document and the 2003 *Gender Policy Document* of the church. The chapter begins by exploring the genesis of the consultation that led to the drawing up of the above mentioned document in conjunction with PCC's gender policy. This is followed by grouping together the achievements and the unfulfilled proposed action plan with the hope of equipping the church to achieve its missional objectives.

4.1 Agenda PCC 2000 and Beyond, Consultation Document and the 2003 Gender Policy of PCC.

The examination of the Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond document will be limited in scope. This is because the interest of the researcher and of the study has more to do with women sharing their experiences on leadership within the church. Therefore, much attention has been given primarily to the section that deals with gender concerns. It was the recommendations and action plan recorded in

this document that was later taken up by the PCC Synod in 2003 and constituted as its Gender Policy Document²⁵.

In an endeavour to find out what precipitated the holding of such a consultation with the convener, the Moderator Emeritus of the PCC, the Very Rev Nku affirms that the rationale for the holding of the consultation was driven by contextual pressures that challenged the church to become more relevant:

The inspiration for such a consultation was because we were breaking in the new millennium and we thought that the church had to make its message relevant to its faith community. This was done by way of evaluating its activities and looking in to the future. Secondly the language of the people at the time was gender equality which the PCC without any prejudice had to address as well²⁶.

It is interesting that the Moderator has identified the church's focus on gender issues as a kind of kairos moment, an opportunity time that called for relevance to context. The constitution of the PCC does not openly discriminate against women. However, this document was shaped within a context of patriarchal hegemony within the culture. So, although it was not the intention of the church to embrace gender discrimination, its cultural setting made it acquiesce in different ways. According to Nku (1999:35)

In the past, it was a little different - women and men felt insecure to have women in leadership positions. Even women themselves were afraid to take up posts of leadership responsibility. However, the PCC has opened up the avenue for women into leadership but has not yet attained equality.

The intention of the constitution of PCC is to facilitate the emergence and development of a faith community of women and men in partnership of complementary roles within the church.

The consultation took place in Church Centre Kumba from the 3rd to the 5th of February 1999 with the Rev. Nyansako-ni-Nku²⁷ as the chairperson. The subject of the consultation was to establish a road map for the PCC in a bid to make it function better in the next millennium. It had as its theme "*What kind of a church do you want?*" It brought together committed Presbyterians²⁸ from all walks of life to wrestle together and analyse the problems and established a way forward for the PCC (Nku 1999: preface). The consultation was divided into six focused groups and discussion dwelt on the following issues: The Evangelistic work of the church, Theological Education (Seminary, Laity), Witness of the Church and Social Transformation, Self-hood of the church and

²⁵ See Appendix 3 for the Gender Policy Document

²⁶ The Very Rev Dr Nku in an interview on the 04/07/20011 in Kumba.

²⁷ Rev, Nyansako-ni-Nku was at the time the Synod Clerk of the PCC and the convener of the consultation (1999:5).

²⁸ The consultation constituted 57 participants both clergy and lay person. Of this number, 39 were men and 18 women (Nku 1999:51-53).

Financial Independence, Evangelism and Social Witness (Education, Health, Church Centres, RTC's etc) and Gender Sensitivity in the PCC (1999:51-53). At the close of the consultation a report was put together as a working document for the PCC into the next millennium. Nku in writing the preface emphasised that "as good Presbyterians all of us , lay and ordained, have a joint responsibility to build Christ's church into an effective instrument of mission, so I highly recommend this report to every Presbyterian" (1999: Preface).

Arising out of the consultation, the following recommendations were made to the Synod concerning how to enhance the evangelistic mission of the church with women in church and society:

1. Intensify and diversify the education of women. Particular attention should be given to rural areas.
2. Allocation of quota of scholarship each year for women.
3. Education of the masses to accept the changing new roles for women in the society.
4. Include courses in the curriculum on gender issues at the Theological Seminary as well as running short courses in the parishes.
5. The church should make findings and research on gender equality-growth inhibition and try to find solution to them.
6. The PCC should offer equal opportunities in employment and appointments, safe-guarding against favouritism and nepotism.
7. Teach gender equality but with a lot of caution.

The focus group of the consultation then proposed the following action plan to translate the recommendations into concrete expressions:

- a. By the year 2005, the number of female pastors should rise to 30.
- b. By the year 2005, the PCC should have trained at least 5 female accountants to join the Treasury Department.
- c. Appoint at least (3) female principals and at least two vice (2) principals. We also expect about 3 Presbytery secretaries by the year 2005.
- d. One Cameroonian female accountant be sent to the Synod office.
- e. Two people to be trained on gender issues or gender studies for the church (one man one woman).
- f. Through scholarship train more women in the following areas:
 - Women's studies- University of Buea
 - Education and management. (Nku 1999: 36-37).

4.2. Achievements of Agenda PCC 2000 and Beyond

The deliberation of the consultation impacted on the ministry and the mission of the church in different ways that have resulted in significant changes to the structure of the church. The Synod took steps over the next two years to increase the number of female pastors from 24 to 35, thus exceeding the target it had set itself both in number and timeframe. In the administration of its 25 Presbyteries, four female pastors have served as Secretaries since 2003 to 2010 and one as Treasurer. However, in spite of this initial achievement, the numerical gap between male and female intake shown in table 1 of Chapter Three indicates the partial acceptance of women as equal partners in the household of God. Secondly, no action has been taken to date to facilitate the

appointment of female pastors to the office of secretary in any of the church's standing committees²⁹. This clearly suggests that women are accepted "only in token numbers that do not threaten their male monopoly on ecclesial power (anything above five percent is perceived as a threat to this monopoly). But they continually subvert women in practice, intimating that they should retain their "femininity"... (Ruther1993: 200).

As described in Chapter Three, there has been increased awareness and the changing roles of women in the society. PCC in partnership with Nkong-Hill Top (CIG) and with the support from Bread for the World (BFTW)³⁰ started the Women Education and Empowerment Programme in 2005 (Smiling women, 2008:2). The study materials on gender awareness are prepared yearly by the departments for women and men's work for the equipping of women and men in urban and rural communities.

The allocation of quota scholarship for leadership development constitutes a sensitive matter in the just sharing of resources between the genders. The quest for an enlightened gender policy meant that the subject of how scholarships were allocated had to be addressed if women were to be empowered. The Very Rev Dr Nku states that: "talking of scholarship does not (*mean*) high training but also to boys and girls in the poor and needy scheme in our secondary schools and there the (*scholarship*) board tries as much as possible to even go beyond that quota, girls sometimes get more attention"³¹ This argument put forward by the Moderator Emeritus is a defensive approach because the scholarship mentioned in the proposed plan made reference to intensifying and diversifying the education of women in rural areas and higher institutions to train women and not primary or secondary school funding from the church.

Concerning the subject of employment, PCC has a stated policy of offering equal opportunities to both men and women. While data on the number of men and women employed in the institutions owned by the church is not available, there is no discrimination in emoluments as the salary policy of the PCC states that in all its departments and institutions salaries will be based on qualification and category or echelon (PCC Book of Orders 1995:51)

²⁹ With the exception of the WWD secretary all other committees of the church are headed by men (PCC Daily Bible reading and diary facts and figures 2010:64-67).

³⁰ Activities and achievement of this project discussed in chapter three

³¹ The Very Rt Rev Dr Nyasako-ni- Nku ,interviewed in Kumba on the 04/07/2011

4.3 Weaknesses of Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond document.

The PCC has taken bold and tangible steps to address some of the urgent matters identified by its action plan in response to the Agenda 2000 and beyond document. This has been done within the context of the traditional image of women in the conservative patriarchal Cameroonian society. Although significant efforts have been made in changing employment laws that discriminate against women, the task is incomplete and increased employment education is needed for the workers and employers to narrow the employment gap between men and women. Within the church itself, increased effort is needed to deepen the quality of gender relationship at the workplace to lift the status of women to be genuinely seen and regarded as co-workers with men. Because in the discipleship of equals argues Fiorenza, “each and every one enriches the discipleship community of equals with their different experiences, vocations, and talents. In short, the concept of “discipleship of equals” seeks to map a radical democratic vision and reality that articulates an alternative to kyriarchal structures of domination” (1996:2)

One of the recommendations argued that gender equality should be taught but urged caution. The underlying concerns suggest that the participants of the consultation were worried that the focus on gender might destabilise the church’s traditional patriarchal environment and result in negative consequences. Ruther (1993: 201) argues that “in such a system it is not possible for women to be equal, but to survive in a token and marginal way at tremendous physical and psychological cost”. The cautious approach seems to imply that they would adopt a slow and non-controversial process of gender education that would seek to ‘please all’. This approach seems to me that the equipping programme would never be radical in scope because it was designed not to cause serious change.

The absence of gender studies in the curriculum of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary has been discussed in chapter three. The impression given is that gender education is an external agenda and not something central to the PCC missional identity and vocation. The subliminal message that was communicated to the parishes was that gender issues are secondary matters. It would not be surprising that pastors, who exercise a lot of influence in the local congregations, failed to take gender concerns seriously, because they were not intentionally and systematically educated to do so.

The Agenda 2000 stated that more women should be trained in women’s studies and management in the University of Buea. However since that policy was stated only one woman has been trained

in gender studies³². It is also worth noting that the PCC has not taken steps to facilitate the training of men in gender studies that would enable the possibility for a male worker to be assigned to work with WEEP to practically demonstrate the envisioned partnership between the community of women and men.

The table below shows a cross section of some of the major departments and institutions of the PCC and the representation of women in leadership. A limited number of institutions have been identified because of the scope of this study. The data in table 2 illustrates that the appointment of women into leadership role of institutions belonging to the PCC has been minimal. It is significant that in the strategic area of the caring ministry of the church's hospital, no woman has been trained or appointed as a medical doctor. Even in the area of education that one would expect to have significant female presence, the data points only to three female principals in secondary schools. In the church's standing committees only one is headed by a woman and where she heads is the committee of women's work. Women limited appointment to head other standing committees poses a challenge to the reality of gender equality advocated for in the constitution and gender policies of the PCC.

Table 2³³

Institution	Year 2005	Headed by men	Headed by women	Year 2010	Headed by men	Headed by women
Secondary Schools	15	14	1	19	16	3
Hospitals	3	3	none	4	4	none
Health Centres	18	11	07	18	10	8
Presbytery Secretaries	23	22	1	23	20	3
Presbytery Treasures	23	23	none	23	22	1
Standing and Other Committees	9	8	1	9	8	1

³² She is the coordinator of WEEP based in Buea.

³³ (These statistics were sourced from PCC daily Bible reading and dairy facts and figures in 2005 and 2010 pages 66-99).

4.4 Conclusion

So far, the study has explored the Agenda 2000 and beyond programme by way of examining its recommendation, action plan and critiquing its implementation. The study has observed that although women have been participating in promoting the evangelistic agenda of the church, discipleship of equals has not yet been attained in power sharing. The ineffectiveness of this policy can be traced from its emphases on advocating that “gender equality issues should be treated with a lot of care and caution”³⁴. This can be inferred that the church has the desire to change but find it difficult to embrace the pain involved in transformation. To strengthen the observation made above, the experiences of the women as gathered during the field work forms the debate of the next chapter.

³⁴ See point 7 on the recommendations stated at the beginning of this chapter and (Nku 1999:37)

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS

5. Introduction

The previous chapter assessed and critiqued the PCC Agenda 2000 and Beyond document with emphasis on the gender related issues postulated and upheld by the PCC. It was argued that though PCC advocates gender equality, the participation of women in its leadership structures is still wanting. The objective of this chapter is to strengthen the critique on Agenda PCC 2000 document, by exploring additional perspectives with women sharing their experiences. As stated in Chapter One, it is the experiences of women who are on the margin of ecclesial power that shape the thrust of the study. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the field research findings based on the experiences of women. First, the methodology used in collecting and analysing the data is presented. Secondly, presentation of research findings; and thirdly, analysing of findings. This has been carried out through the following ecclesia lenses: (1) Church and women empowerment, (2) Women participation and/or representation in leadership positions and (3) The impact of gender policies on the lives of women.

5.1 Field work Methodology and Presentation of Research findings.

To better understand the experiences of the women who are on the margins of ecclesial power and leadership in the PCC that shape the thrust of this missional exploration, it will be imperative to listen to their voices as they share their experiences with the researcher.

The fieldwork was carried out within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon with a selected number of women who are employed by the PCC, two Synod delegates and three members out of the seven who participated in the consultation that led to the Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond document. The researcher conducted the interviews herself in English using a voice recorder and the interviewees responded based on their own experiences and views on the empowerment of women into leadership positions within the PCC. To arrive at the necessary information, each category of interviewees responded to eight semi- structured questions. However, in the course of the interview a few unstructured questions were asked to shape the discussion.

The method used during the interview was one on one interview at different places and times. The choice of time and place was done at the convenience of the interviewees. As such, appointments and venues were booked by telephone and scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee. The selection of who to interview was done on the bases of the interviewee's ability to provide relevant information on the subject. This sampling was purposeful and judgmental. Babbie and Mouton (2001:167) state that buttressed, purposive and judgemental sampling method may be appropriate when the researcher knows the population, its elements and the nature of the research and its aims. This enables the researcher to answer the research question(s) and meet the objectives. The participants were informed about the study and an informed consent form was made available for voluntary decision to participate or withdraw at any given point during the interview. The participants' consent was sought following ethical clearance guidelines and all accepted that their names be mentioned in the study.

5.2 Presentation of Research findings

Research findings has been done as indicated in the introduction of the entire study focusing on the following categories of interviewees: female pastors and other female workers of the PCC, staff of WWD and WEEP departments, Decade motivator, Synod delegates and three of the nine members who made up the focus group on gender sensitivity during the consultation.

5.2.1 Female pastors and other female workers Responses

Both female pastors and other women employed by the PCC who were interviewed see the PCC as a pacesetter institution within the Cameroonian society in terms of ensuring the empowerment of women within its faith based communities. Rev Rachael YENCHI³⁵ for instance points out that:

Empowerment has to do with acquiring knowledge, skills and the ability of having self esteem by an individual. Generally for the PCC to have accepted and ordain us as pastors is great empowerment when I compare it with other denominations where women have not been given the opportunity to hold leadership positions talk less of ordaining them as pastors. The fact that I am a pastor gives me the opportunity to hold leadership position, I can talk to people of different status both men and women of all ages.

YENCHI's comments seem to interpret women's empowerment primarily through the lens of ordination. Ordination is however a privilege for the select few. It is empowering because in theory it gives women the same ecclesial authority as men within the community. Is ordination of

³⁵ Rev Rachael YENCHI is parish pastor Ntasen and chaplain Bamenda colleges interviewed on the 23rd of June 2011 in Bamenda.

women an adequate measure of empowerment? Ruther (1993: 200) points out that securing women's ordination through liberal assumptions contains the seed of its own contradiction. Women's ordination status thus remains symbolically and socially anomalous. It is an important step in the right direction but there are other deep and entrenched attitudinal blocks that required the concerted effort of the whole church. According to Rev Mary Salle³⁶

Empowerment is giving some one the chance to exploit, to come out and do those things which the one is able to do, giving an individual the privileges the one deserves, have a say on what is happening and equipped to contribute to the wellbeing of the community where the individual belongs- in this case the church.

Her comments confirm that although PCC has invested in the empowerment of some it's female members, and can boast of being a trend setter in the ecclesial community of Cameroon in the educational and skills development of its female leaders yet there remains a big gap in their representation in top leadership positions over the years. Rev, Yenchi confirms this perspective in her comment:

Concerning the representation of women in the administrative ladder of the church, at grass root level one will find a lot of women coming up as chair persons in the congregations as well as presbyteries. Where there is difference is very obtrusive is in the administrative set up of the church or high offices. Women are not really represented and for what reason I do not know. It is just bias and male dominance. Each time they appoint men and when they fail they are replaced by another man but that is not the case with women, they keep looking low on us. Like the case of Presbyterian secretaries they appoint even young person (men) who have just spent a few years in the parish but for women that is not the case.

Her comments expose the contradiction within the church. On one hand the PCC boasts of its achievement in empowering women within the life and work of the church. On the other hand, she has exposed the serious flaws present at the highest level of the church's administrative system that overlooks and under-estimates the capacity of women for leadership. Yenchi identifies and accuses the church of 'bias, prejudice and discrimination' in its gender relations that ensure that women are not given a just opportunity to compete with men in strategic leadership positions. Grace Egbe³⁷ observed that

Women are not well represented especially during this last staffing where even the two women who were Presbyterian secretaries are no longer occupying the post they are all going for studies and have not been replaced. But does this mean there are no other female pastors in the field who can take over this responsibilities? The one who was Presbytery treasurer has been removed. Looking at the high offices in the Synod office all but one are occupied by men. When there is a meeting of senior staff members in the synod office what do you expect the one women present to say?

³⁶ Rev Mary Salle was Presbyterian Secretary for Meme North presbytery and presently pursuing MTh degree at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary Kumba, interviewed on July 7, 2011 in Kumba

³⁷ Miss Grace Egbe is the manager of the Presbyterian Employees Self-Help Scheme (PESH), interviewed on the 12/07/2011 in Buea.

From the above experiences shared by these women one may see some aspect of hidden transcript in what the subordinate leaders feel and what the top-level administration claims that they are proactive in women's leadership development. The expression of these women shows a deep feeling of hurt at their no-affirmation and non-consideration in strategic leadership positions by the authorities of PCC. The reflections shared by the women raised concerns as to whether they had knowledge of what the Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond postulated for the empowerment of women during the new millennium in terms of employment and appointments to strategic leadership positions. Rev Ngwatache³⁸ shared her experience as follows:

The truth is that most of us do not read church policy documents. Hence we have limited knowledge of what we have to ask for or make a follow up if not implemented. I think during our female pastors conferences we need to include such documents as a topic of discussion so that we can explore more avenues. However since the launch of the "Agenda PCC 2000" there have been some few appointments which can be about 30% representation of the women in leadership position. Where I find the church lacking is including gender studies in our Theological Seminary if possible in our secondary schools and the training at least one male to work with the women and sensitize our Christian population on the need for men and women to work together.

The feeling expressed above indicates that the policy documents are not well read by the people (especially women) concerned and this has resulted in these women not holding the PCC accountable for the promises made. Therefore women low participation in leadership positions within the church can be attributed to male dominance, low educational level of women, lack of informed knowledge of what has been proposed for them and timidity on the part of some women and to a lesser extent women lack of solidarity among themselves.

5.2.2. Responses from staff of WWD and WEEP coordinator

Issues of women and empowerment within the PCC have always been of great importance to its ministry and mission as seen in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, the level to which these women have been empowered so that they can have equal opportunities as the men at the workplace remains a bone of contention within the church. According to Rev Mrs Mary Kinge³⁹

Talking about gender issues in PCC is quite challenging because it is a new concept that many people especially pastors both male and female are trying to adapt to. The whole language of discrimination, inequality and so on is deeply rooted in the traditional cultures because everywhere you go it is a chain. We are trying to organise seminars to educate people to change the gender stereotype that have been from time immemorial. It is something embedded in our African traditions and the church too has embraced it and sometimes they build their arguments on the biological built of women as the weaker sex and that alone is a hindrance as far as balancing gender is concern.

³⁸ Rev Mrs Ngwatache was a Presbyterian sec and presently a parish pastor of Ntanfoang, interviewed on the 04/06/2011 in Bali.

³⁹ Rev, Mrs Mary Kinge is the coordinator of WEEP, interviewed on the 12/07/2011 in Buea.

Mrs Chofor⁴⁰ observed that “patriarchy is playing a role in the low participation of women in leadership positions in the church. Also women were not involved in education or career oriented professions during the missionary era”. Therefore very few women have attained the level of education that may qualify them to handle positions of leadership. She argues that you cannot do what you do not know, and you cannot give what you do not have. Hence more women need to be sent to school as the men so that they can attain the qualification and skills needed to handle positions of leadership.

In addition, Rose Ewang⁴¹ argued that beside the men segregating women, women themselves need to be in solidarity with each other. She argues “if the women themselves will know that they are the majority in the church and if they will learn how to do away with the PHD (Pull-Her-Down) syndrome where they will not want a woman to be ahead. If they try to stop this, then women will definitely be in leadership positions in the church”. In affirmation, Nyambura (1996:13) postulates that “The struggle is hard because women, too, are not free from the vices that discriminate against women. We, too, become greedy for power, money and status; we, too can exercise domination, control and exclusion, just like our brothers”.

Observations from the staff of WWD, the ecumenical decade motivator of PCC, as well as the coordinator of WEEP show that; gender is still an issue within the church leadership that needs to be given adequate attention. All seem to be in conformity with the fact that, besides missionary and cultural hindrances that limited women involvement in public life, education remains the key to the empowerment of women in the present context and women need to be in solidarity with each other if they are to realise real empowerment.

5.2.3 Responses from Synod Representatives and Policy Leaders.

In connection with the empowerment of women into leadership position within the PCC, the researcher interviewed three synod members and four of the members who took part on the consultation which lead to the Agenda 2000 document. In response to the question on what the church understands by gender equality Mrs Ntuba⁴² stated:

⁴⁰ Mrs Chofor was the Ecumenical Decade motivator of PCC and Regional sec. for WWD East Mongo, interviewed on July 4, 2011 in Kumba.

⁴¹ Mrs Ewang is the Regional Sec. for WWD North west, interviewed on the 03/06/2011 in Bamenda.

⁴² Mrs Ntuba Beatrice is a vice chair person of Presbyterian church Kumba town and a synod Exco member, interviewed in Kumba on July 4, 2011.

Gender equality means women and men working together in partnership. When we talk of gender equality in PCC we are not fighting for anything like a 50/50 equality. It is just that men should not leave women behind; they should give women the opportunity to express their God given talents. To ensure gender balance within the PCC, it is constitutionally and practically accepted that women be represented in all the committees and that is why some of us find ourselves even in Synod committees where decisions affecting the entire church are made.

Partnership is a communal system of power sharing built on reciprocity. Women are not looking for hand-outs but a just opportunity to sharing equally in all of the opportunities for ministry and mission. Responding to the same question Mrs Grace Eneme⁴³ states that:

I think the church is still grappling with the term gender equality because coming from traditional setup gender equality is something unheard of. In a church which has been for ages led by men; they knew from home that women take the second place the men are on the top so to have a real gender equality will be a difficult thing within the PCC. This segregation is compounded by the fact that from missionary days men were trained to preach the gospel and to handle positions of leadership while the women were train as good house wives. Women were not really given the chance to attend formal schools that could put them on the same plat form with men. However PCC is struggling to change the situation though on a snail rapidity.

Eneme has raised an important issue concerning the role that ecclesial tradition and culture plays in dis-empowering women. Her argument that the missionary model of engagement in the society has bequeathed some dis-empowering tools that resulted in a negative impact on the wholesome development of women is a credible argument. The convenor of the consultation and the moderator emeritus of the PCC the Very Rev Dr Nku⁴⁴ comments that;

the issue of gender equality is a huge task and it cannot be done overnight and we have tried to do it through groups, if you look at the study material which men and women do in the CWF and CMF you will see a lot of effort being done to try to sensitize the Christian population on some of our cultural beliefs and practices that dehumanise our women and girls. Christ converts culture and the gospel should be the light in transforming and reforming some of our traditional beliefs which are not so much in light with the gospel. So women should be given the place to serve as best as they could as their capacities require and as best as men do.

Dr Nku's perspectives places the slow progress made in the empowerment of women on the negative influences within the culture that have also moved into the church. However the exploration so far seems to suggest that the institution of PCC also has its own ecclesial culture that also manufactures negative disabling tools that prevent the full participation of women.

⁴³ Mrs Grace Eneme was the first Cameroonian Woman to head the WWD as National Secretary. She was the leader of the group that examine gender issues during the PCC Agenda consultation. Presently she works with the council of Protestant churches in Cameroon concern with the social services and women issues, interviewed, July 17, 2011 in Buea.

⁴⁴ The Very Rev Dr Nku is Moderator Emeritus of PCC and the convenor of the Consultation of Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond, interviewed in Kumba on July 4, 2011.

Talking on the low representation of women in leadership position within the church, Rev Mih⁴⁵ opines that “the challenge goes back to women because since the launch of the Agenda 2000 and beyond women have been appointed and removed. So if they cannot live up to the standards there is no use keeping them there because they are women? They are not a representation but rather they are put there to work”. He goes further to say that “child bearing too is a major problem with you women. When women are appointed sooner or later you see them pregnant. This really will make the work suffer; you know administrative position is very demanding as well”. Arguing against such male autocratic views Tappa (1987:103) states that “the exclusion of women from effective participation in most aspects of church life is not much based on biology. Sex only offers a ready-made excuse, the real issue is power”. According to Rev Aji-mvo⁴⁶ appointments are done on merits.

People have to prove their competence even if you provide quotas we have to examine individuals and their output. However our cultural influences play a role in hindering a real progress in this direction. For example the church has been used to handling men and men can be sent anywhere but when it comes to women because of their marital status it becomes difficult and to an extent the task of handling marital responsibilities and administrative position is very demanding. Here it is done with some discernment yet I will still emphasize that merit remains the underlying factor and not segregation.

The comments made by Mih and Aji-mvo concerning the low participation of women in leadership have more to do with legitimizing male dominance and less of biological features of women and meritocracy. This subordination Ruther (1993:193) argues is equally sustained by the patriarchal view of women having inferiority of mind and soul as well. On the other hand, Eneme and Nku feel that traditional and cultural beliefs system held since the era of the missionaries still plays a significant role in the low participation of women in leadership position. Nevertheless, a common opinion held by all members interviewed points to the need to improve on the quality of education of the women and the need for the church to continue sensitizing the faith communities on the need to do away with cultural practices and beliefs that discriminate against women.

5.3 Data analyses

The rationale of data analysis is to transform information into an answer for the original research question. Content analysis as a tool of data analysis would help to analyse the content of the transcript from in-depth interviews. To understand the way in which women of the PCC experience

⁴⁵ Rev. Mih was the secretary of the group discussion on gender sensitivity during the consultation. Interviewed on July 18, 2011 in Bamenda

⁴⁶ Rev. Aji-mvo is the National secretary Men’s Work Department PCC and synod delegate. Interviewed on the July 4, 2011 in Bamenda

ecclesial marginalization, data has been analysed under the following themes: church and women empowerment, women representation or participation in leadership structures, the impact of Agenda 2000 and beyond programme on the lives of the women.

5.3.1 Church and women empowerment

The PCC has a gender policy beside the Agenda 2000 and beyond programme in which it seeks to instil in the society the concept that God created man and woman in God's image. This means that men and women have equal status before God and the church will seek to see that this is understood and implemented (gender policy 2003:1). The term empowerment was defined differently by the women who were interviewed. Nevertheless, it conveyed a common message to all those interviewed. There seems to be an affirmation from all that, empowerment is a way of giving an individual the privilege to fully explore, utilise, participate in decision making that affects them and being able to have self esteem.

Has the PCC really empowered women? The general impression was yes, because they felt happy being accepted as individuals with potentials. "Just the fact that I am a pastor gives me the opportunity to stand where women were not used to standing; this to me is power"⁴⁷. It may be quite true that ordination has been accorded women and it is power but then what next after ordination? I agree with Fiorenza's argument that "ordination will not resolve the problems associated with patriarchy in the church...unless substantial changes accompany the ordination of women, the church's male define hierarchy will not change" (1997: 8). In like manner Clifford continues to advocate for extensive collaboration of women and men in a spirit of true mutuality so as to attain a true partnership of equals. Adding a few women in the ordained ministry without a significant revision of the institutional laws will make no difference (Clifford 2005:146).

From the activities of WWD, WEEP mentioned in chapter three of this study, one will definitely support the fact that PCC has made a tremendous effort in accepting women as having potentials that when exploited will lead to a better society. Through seminars and leadership courses organised by the various agencies of the church more women can now read and write, lead worship in church, participate in politics, engage in income generating activities, own property, improve knowledge on human rights and become leaders of None Governmental Organizations (NGO's).

⁴⁷ Rev Rachael Yenchu in an interview on July 1, 2011 in Bamenda

5.3.2 Women participation in leadership structures

Participation in leadership position is a major challenge within the PCC as observed from the interviews.

I have been given the opportunity to study in the same school with men, we come out with the same qualification, the men are not given special classes for administration yet when it comes to appointments they are given priority over us. Are we women not intelligent enough?⁴⁸

This kind of expression shows how much women feel accepted yet marginalised within the household of God. What meaning can faith have in churches that seem to be liberal yet not willing to share with women in the battle of subordination and oppression? Reflecting on this situation Kanyoro (1997:181) argues that such churches fell threatened over institutional comfort and invested privileges and judgement of what is right or wrong with the long established traditions and practices. Kanyoro further affirms, “Faith that holds itself aloof from people seeking to escape marginalization poses a serious risk for the future of the church and the church of the future” (181).

The leadership of women is more visible in women’s group within the congregations, eldership at Congregational, presbytery levels, and Women department. Clifford (2005:146) critiques this level of participation arguing that “women leading prayers in which ‘man’ supposedly includes women and God is imaged as always male will not advance the course for women full equality”. This therefore calls for a change in the vocabulary of the church’s liturgy and constitution for a better future of the church. Positions of higher levels such as in the areas of education, Health secretaries, General Secretary of scholarship Board and Secretary Committee of the Ministry are all male appointment. And in prescribing the functions of such officers the PCC constitution language has always been “He shall”. Though women serve as members of such committees and boards, they are not considered to be qualified for appointment as head for these committees. In fact during an interview with the PCC decade motivator she lamented

Once in a while we sit as observers during Synod meetings to see how those representing women are interacting; you see that they are far behind, so it is not bringing women into it but causing them to be able to participate fully; that active participation, active involvement is not there⁴⁹

The responses from the interviews have shown that the women understand that beside marginalisation in appointments, the women who represent them are not adequately informed to represent their interest. While some men hold that appointments are made on merits and in the

⁴⁸ Rev Mary Kinge in an interview on July 12, 2011 in Buea

⁴⁹ Mrs Chofor in an interview on July 4, 2011 in Kumba

interest of the women not to be overburdened with administrative duties coupled with domestic responsibilities, women have a different perspective. The women pointed out the diverse reasons for low participation in leadership as patriarchy, low education, lack of vital information on major decisions that concern women and lack of solidarity among women.

5.3.3 The impact of Agenda 2000 and beyond on the lives of women.

The Agenda PCC 2000 and Beyond document was not well read by most of the women. As such the interview served as an eye opener to the women. They appreciated the church for having done much in steps taken to empower women but there is much work yet to be done. In almost all the departments and institutions of the church women are employed and given the same salaries as their male counterparts with the same qualifications (Book of Orders 1995:51). The woman acknowledged that the educational progress has been made to the opportunity given and investment made by the PCC. This has not only helped them as individuals but the church as well. The achievements recoded by the WWD and WEEP programmes in their various spheres of influence, give a clear testimony of the impact of the Agenda 2000 and beyond programme which does not need to be over belaboured here. This notwithstanding power should not be shared only with a few rather power increases when it is shared equitably.

Grumm (1997:31) maintains that “tokenism is so detrimental to women. One or two women cannot do all the work: if change is to take place it must be done in the context of community, so no one person can become a single target or carry the burden alone”. Joining voices with her, I am saying that more women decision- makers are needed so that this situation can be rectified. No matter how painful the process of change may seem, the PCC need not shy away in responding to the cry of women for fuller participation with the hope of articulating an inclusive community of faith.

5.4 Conclusion

Through interviews conducted the experiences of the women on issues of empowerment and leadership positions within the church have been brought to light. We have seen that the PCC though still very patriarchal in its leadership structures, indeed does not intentionally seek to discriminate in employment of women and men and acknowledges that women have talents by giving equal opportunities in leadership where women are found capable. Therefore it has managed to improve on the lots of the women folk within the church and the society. Since women make up

about 70% of membership⁵⁰ of the church there is need for a more sensitization of the population on the need to practice gender equality. It does not suffice accepting women as people with integrity but empowering women to participate actively in decision making positions within the church. The next chapter will be looking at key principles in building a just community of women and men in partnership for leadership empowerment in the PCC based on the World Communion of Reform Churches

⁵⁰ Gender policy document of PCC 2003:1.

CHAPTER SIX

CONSTRUCTING A JUST COMMUNITY OF WOMEN AND MEN AS PARTNERS IN LEADERSHIP - A WAY FORWARD FOR THE CHURCH'S MISSION

6. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research findings, analysis the responses from selected women and authorities of the PCC. From the interviews, the experiences of the women have been explored on three issues: church and women empowerment, women and leadership positioning and the impact of Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond on the lives of the women. The study has so far shown that women are generally accepted as co-workers but their leadership advancement in positions of power and authority constitute a slow journey. Nevertheless, the responses from the women interviewed indicate that PCC has made some efforts for the advancement of women in different spheres of life thereby narrowing the gender gap that it inherited from the Basel Mission.

This chapter focuses on identifying key principles in building a just community of women and men in partnership for leadership positioning. The just leadership concept has been utilised from the World Communion of Reform Churches (WCRC) manual for Reformed church leaders. The PCC being an active member church of this global ecumenical instrument has therefore embraced the principles of building a just community as the door through which it can achieve a gender balance community.

The key question that under-gird this chapter is: What constitutes the building stones that can lead to the construction of a just community of women and men within the Mission and Ministry of the PCC? To what extent has the Reformed ethos and heritage of the church influenced its approach towards the empowerment of women? In this regard, the study will examine briefly the Presbyterian system of governance and gender in order to interpret and understand the concept of leadership within the PCC

6.1 Presbyterianism and Gender issues

In the Dictionary of Ecumenical Movement (2002:186), Presbyterianism is described as “a system of governance where the church is less tied to a territorial understanding of the church and stresses instead on the relative independence of the ministerial college”. In this model the ordained clergy belong to presbyteries, which supply leadership to congregations grouped under them. The clergy-

originally pastors, together with elders, teachers and deacons, according to Calvin's scheme – clergies lead in the word (preaching), Sacraments (Baptism and Lord's Supper) and exercise of discipline. Local Synods and national Assemblies are attended by both clerical and lay delegates. They wrestle with issues of common interest and exercise varying degrees of authority over the smaller units.

As part of that family of churches which adopted the Presbyterian ecclesial system of governance, PCC hold to the cardinal principle of reformed theology that embraces the Priesthood of all Believers (Book of Orders 1995:3-4). Also in its gender policy and constitution, the Church acknowledges that women constitute 70% of its membership. They are the most active group within the church and have contributed to the common saying that "Without women, there is no PCC". Yet women are sparsely represented within the leadership of the church (Gender policy 2003:1). In an effort to address this gross gender inequality, the PCC's constitution and gender policy advocated for equal opportunity for both male and female members in the administration and governance of the church (PCC constitution 1998:14).

However, the implementation of its policy documents to enhance the evangelistic mission of the church face some challenges that warrant an exploration of what God's mission is about and how the PCC can live out this mission to have a just community of women and men in partnership with God's mission in their context.

6.2 God's Mission and the Church

Gittins (1993:7) asserts that

The call to mission begins with Baptism which is sign of incorporation into the Christian family and the right which mark humanity as responsible and effective members of the body of Christ. Baptism is a sufficient prerequisite for mission and every baptised person becomes part of the people of God, the church. It is however regrettable that even with this understanding of mission by all the Baptised, very little authority is appropriated to women. So much seems to remain in words on pages of church rhetoric and practice sometimes seems unabridged.

If the church is called to be an agent in God's mission called by God to participate (Bosch 1991) then the PCC must seriously reflect on what it is called to be and to do. The church does not exist to fulfil its own agenda but continuing the mission of Jesus as outlined in Luke 4: 18-19 "*The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and the recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour*" (NIV).

According to Mukamakuza (2009:84) the ultimate mission of the church is to proclaim the reality of the Kingdom of God in the world. God's mission leads us to encounter people, especially those on the margins of society. It is when our personal space is opened up to others, where others invite us into their own world and where class, tribe, race, colour and gender distinction that radical engagement in mission is possible. Gittin (1993) argues that mission becomes meaningless without change. It calls for the availability of the church to engage 'the other' because mission loses its authenticity when it becomes insensitive to the real needs of others.

Transformation calls for critical reflection on what is meant by being created in the image of God (*Imago-Dei*) and how God wants humanity to relate with each other. Michelle Gonzalez, (2007:164) postulates that "authentic transformation of the *Imago-Dei* into an egalitarian model will never occur unless Christians radically transform their imaging of God". She argues further that "as far as God is imaged exclusively as male; men will be viewed as powerful as and closer to the Divine than women". This negative perception runs the risk of reducing God's mission and ministry to men's activity and not as a corporate venture for the community of women and men.

I agree with Oduyoye's (2001:46) perspective concerning the church as God's missional agent within the African context. She argues that:

The church is a round table which are seated the people of God who are continually nourished as the body of Christ, from resources that God provides... all are invited to participate in the Christ –event and is one which is open to all the vulnerabilities of inclusiveness...none can be first or last: at the end of the day the owner of the vineyard will say 'pay all equally' with the invitation come, you who have been faithful.

The logic of her argument implies that a church should be a place of equality irrespective of gender, colour, race and social statues. It is a place where each individual feels free to participate, and is welcomed to sharing their diverse gifts and potentials. According to Mukamakuza (2009:84) the church was given God's mission and since it is the body of Jesus Christ, then it is called to be a witness and to further the kingdom of God in the world. For this reason there is need for a transformed church which moves away from hierarchical systems of dispensing power and embraces partnership that involves mutuality and reciprocity.

6.3 Principles of building a just community

Living together in just relationships as the people of God, constitutes one of the most important issues needed in our world today. In order for the Gospel message to make a positive impact on the lives of the people, the church needs to engage in life transforming prophetic ministry. Holistic

development of people requires the building of society that is free from exploitation and oppression and this is part of God's mandate to his church (Luke 4:21). Campbell (1991:80) argues that "the integrity of God's creation- with its well-balanced gift and graces-is essential for a world in which the tree of peace that is rooted in justice will bear fruit". How can a just community be formed? What new theology should the church embrace to equip church leadership that is more relevant to the society?

Answers to these questions will emerge through reflecting on God's purpose in the creation of humanity, re-reading the Bible in the context of gender justice and sexuality, rethinking our theology of leadership in the context of the church, encouraging an attitude of self esteem and perpetuating a leadership style that is void of misguided competition between men and women. If the church wants to make the scriptures make a positive impact on the society then, it needs to ensure that its own ministry and mission structures do not embrace and practice acts of oppression and discrimination that will disqualify the church from addressing the oppression within the wider society that deny women fullness of life.

A church that is seriously committed to the justice ministry of Jesus will have no option but to put up resistance against structures which perpetuate the marginalisation and subordination of the vulnerable and instead lay more emphasis on developing partnership within the household of God. Therefore the church as God's missional community should continuously find new ways of guidance so that it may serve as a safe place where men and women who experience the diversity of gifts that the creator has loaned them. Reflecting on the institutionalization of the church and women's experiences of authority, Russell (1993:93) argues that:

Basic Christian communities and feminist Christian communities are not opposed to institutionalization and organisation. In fact, they are often part of well-organised net works of groups. What they opposed to is inflexible and dominating institutional forms that exercise power for the benefit of those who control these institutions.

A paradigm shift in leadership styles is needed that would include men and women as mutual partners. Such a shift will need a totally different kind of authority which is not based on hierarchical models of competition but one in which women and men complement each other because they are bearers of the image of God (*Imago-Dei*). As such the PCC need to move from a leadership form which subordinate and alienate women to a system of governance that embraces inclusiveness.

6.3.1. From hegemony to partnership.

It will be impossible for the church to fulfil its mission with integrity without women and men working in mutual partnership. The relationship of women and men should not call for domination or subordination by either sex rather relationship built on mutual partnership. Oduyoye (2001:87) postulates that inclusiveness lies at the heart of the Jesus' command and participation in his mission embraces inclusivity. This call for inclusiveness according to Jessica Nakawombe (in Kanyoro & Njoroge 1996:40) inclusiveness stems from our common baptism and there can be no healing or empowerment in and by the church when women are excluded or marginalised. "The unity of the church requires that women be free to live the gifts which God has given them and to respond to their calling to share fully in the life and the witness of the church" (Tveit 2010: np).

6.3.2 Created in the image of God (*imago-dei*)

Humanity is a reflection of the divine nature of God and God stands out as the source of human being's identity and purpose on earth. Moltmann (1985:215) argues that "from very ancient times theological thinking within the Judeo-Christian heritage has considered the *imago-Dei* or the Image of God to be the corner stone of thinking of who human being are and on their relationship to God". Therefore both male and female represent God's image and thus form the basis of *Imago-Dei*. In the understanding of this study all human beings are children of God and they all originated from the express will of God be they male or female. As God's creation they therefore own an identity of God and authority rest in Christ new imaging of authority (Galatians 3:28). Nevertheless, to govern is not identical to male but to all who have the ability and have the capability bestowed on them and skills that have been learned.

Kyung (1994:253) argues that, "to be human is to be created in the image of God and this does not mean simply a man or a women but it is the community in relationship that reflects the image of God". Therefore in this image of God as a community in relationship, there is no place for oppressive relationship between the genders. It is in community that humanity can reflect God's purpose and fulfil the image of God in which they were created for mutual relationship. Where there is no mutual relationship, there is no authentic human experience of God. Peacock (2010:24) offers a global perspective when he affirms that "the image of God as a community of being as represented in the "Three Persons of the Holy Trinity can only be represented in human community as a totality".

Furthermore, missional servant leadership from women and men is central to God's call to the church (Bosch 1991). It is God who calls and sends irrespective of gender, Christ provides the example of what God requires and the Holy Spirit equips all to meet this agenda. Van der Borcht (2000:482 as quoted by Leene & Hendriks 2010:169) argues that "church and office do not exist by themselves; they receive their significance only within this Trinitarian context. Such an approach to church office in the light of *Missio-Dei* creates abundant space to experience the office and understands it in terms of vocation". Rather than focusing on sexual preference in its model of governance, the church give attention to empowering all of its diverse membership to give effective leadership at every level of governance in its mission and ministry.

6.3.3 Theology of partnership of men and women

Within this study, "Partnership" expresses a just relationship between men and women based on mutual recognition that both are created in the image of God with diverse gifts and abilities to complement each other within the church's ministry and mission. It implies a relationship based on the understanding of equality, justice and *Koinonia*⁵¹ in which the two agree to share responsibilities in planning for the wellbeing of the church and society. According to Oduyoye (1993:124) partnership issues go beyond numbers. However its presence constitutes an index of the recognition of one's responsibility to be in active partnership. The physical presence of women in the church at worship has not ensured their presence in the shaping of PCC's policies and priorities. Oduyoye therefore argues that:

The one-sided development of the sources of human authority has meant that stewardship is domination, husbandry is control and partnership defined as complementary in which the paternal determines the scope of being of the maternal. Patriarchy has ousted God's intention of partnership (1993:124).

Nevertheless, if one have to discuss the issue of partnership within the church it should be grounded in the framework of justice, equality and the building of an alternative community that is based on fellowship rules and not hierarchical order (Peacock 2010:38). Peacock (2010:39) also suggests that the models of Trinity and *Koinonia* can best give an insight into partnership relationship between women and men. Firstly, it is appropriate to liken partnership in relationship to the Trinitarian relationship because in the Trinitarian relationship equality and diversity exist at the same time without domination. If this is practiced by the church it should produce a healthy leadership relationship between the sexes. In the Trinitarian understanding of leadership the

⁵¹ *Koinonia* is a Greek word for fellowship, shared partnership or commitment (Peacock 2010:39).

emphasis is on community in which the three persons of the Godhead are distinct yet mutually interdependent on each other.

Here the individuality of each of the three persons of the trinity is maintained while at the same time each person shares in the life of the other in a non-dominating sense. The doctrine of the trinity offers us a model of collective leadership in which each of the three persons is seen to exist harmoniously without extinguishing anybody. For everybody has a unique place in that community and no one dominates the other (Peacock 2010:39).

Furthermore for a just community to exist, the church should seek Koinonia as a form of partnership within its faith community. The early church as recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 2:42) depicts a church life which was grounded in the mutual sharing of life and material possessions of the believers. Peacock as such argues that the basis of Koinonia is the common fellowship (Koinonia) that we share in Jesus (1 John 1:6-7). Koinonia therefore offers a model of collegiality and co-responsibility than hierarchy which perpetrates lordship and subordination of one party over the other. God's ultimate will is that women and men should work together for the promotion of his kingdom and the unity of the human kin-dom.

6.3.4 Sense of self or self esteem

Lack of self confidence can act as a major setback to empowerment. Women need to stand firm for their liberation because no one else will liberate them fully if they fail to see the necessity for such a transformation and the need for united action. Paul Freire (1996:46) argues that the oppressed should struggle for their self-liberation. However, he insists that this involvement should come from their conviction that they must fight for their liberation. Once they are convinced, the first radical requirement in entering the struggle is to regain first their humanity by getting rid of the image of the oppressed that they have internalised.

Following this argument, it is the place of women to first of all acknowledge that they are created with equal dignity and integrity as men and their difference lay in important but minor biological construct by God who created all human beings in his image. Therefore in every human being, female and male there are sparks of divinity. To be conscious of this, leads to inner freedom from self-pity and de-humanisation of the self. When individuals become conscious of their divinely shaped identity then it should motivate them to claim their rightful place within the society. For women to have a greater participation in the decision making of the church which is predominately male ruled, they need to be more self confident and exhibit a high spirit of determination and commitment to liberating themselves and also preparing a way for other women to follow.

Paul Freire (1996:33) argues that “freedom is a struggle; it is not a gift but it happens through reflection and action that leads to liberation process”. Therefore, for women to be in all levels of leadership position within the church, they need to engage in critical reflection on their identity, vocation and what talents they possess which need to be harnessed to participate fully in the mission of God through his church. Transformation, according to Freire (1996:34) does not come by chance; rather “it is a product of human action just as objective social reality does not exist by chance but as the product of human action”. To have a just community and to empower women requires the transformation of the mindset of both women and men to view themselves as equal partners in the household of God.

6.3.5 Re-reading the Bible in the context of gender justice and sexuality

Although I have argued that the mutual partnership relationship that exists in the doctrine of the Trinity can serve as a template for the partnership community of women and men, it has some limitations. Patriarchal hegemonic language has dominated the use of the Trinity and a community of three men: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All of the prescribed male features have impacted negatively on feminist concern for the equality of women and men (Phiri 2010:457). As a step to the building of a just community of women and men in partnership, there is need for a critical reflection on some of the Biblical passages that have been misread by some preachers and theologians to give the woman a second place in the society. Peacock (2010:36) posits that “in the context of the church, sometimes the language of partnership is used for hierarchical relationship that justifies the subordination of one gender to the other. Men in this context are seen as the dominant partner and women are expected to be subordinate to men”. Writing in relation to literary interpretation and understanding of the Bible, Mwaura (1998:33) observed that some Christians accept the bible literally and any attempt to place texts in context is seen as distorting the biblical teachings. There are also others who have sought to understand the texts in context but still continue to treat women negatively.

The literal reading of the second creation narrative (Gen 2: 21-25) is a point in case which is used to justify hierarchical theology in which men exercise autocratic rule over women. I will argue that God’s intention here was not that of the suppression of the rights and dignity of women but rather to build a community of mutual partnership built upon reciprocity between women and men. God did not take the head bone to create woman so that the woman should dominate neither did God use the toe bone to create woman for the man to trample upon. Instead God’s choice was the rib

that is located at the side of the body. This strategic position constitutes a potent symbol that woman was equal to the man and both should exist “side by side” to participate in decision-making. They complement each other with their unique yet distinct character and abilities that are natural to their specific gender. Peacock argues that there are only two abilities that are exclusive to one sex, they are childbirth and breast feeding both of which are abilities that women have and men do not. Both sexes are perfectly capable of involvement in all other tasks and roles (2010:37).

For the church to experience gender justice, Rakoczy (2004:18) suggest a heavy deconstruction and critiquing of what has been adopted by the church in its theological life and teaching regarding the involvement of women in the church. Pauline Epistles that talk of the silence of women in church need to be re-read within the context in which they were written and they must be appropriate according to their relevance for today’s post modern community. Mwaura (1998:33) also argues for the necessity of re-reading the scripture in the light of women’s active quest for participation in all areas of life that impacts on their wellbeing: “there is need to place the Bible stories and teachings in the historical context in which they were written, to take the cultural assumptions of their writers into account and above all, to chose in the Bible what is life and community-building”. What is suggested here is not the discarding of the Bible as an authentic source of scripture but a re-reading of some scriptures and their relevance in addressing the present context in which we live. In this light, Oduyoye (2001:53) opines that “there are many ways to preach the gospel, in action as well as words, art and service. Yet it is difficult for women to experience that preaching as ‘Good News’ when their calling to leadership in the church is denied and their access to theological education that would help them to understand and interpret biblical and church tradition is limited”.

6.3 .6 Partnership void of misguided competition

The contribution of women in the advancement of the church cannot be over emphasised. Partnership in leadership calls for power sharing and greater collaboration and not competition. Who wins and who losses or a power struggle between men and women concerning who is at the top of the decision making process should not be left to misguided competition. Women are not seeking primarily to rule over men but to working in just collaboration according to each individual’s capabilities. “All people are equal before God. But equal does not mean identical; it means that although people have different gifts and different functions, they all come from the same source” (Ken-Phin 1997:183). Therefore “Power-sharing is a prerequisite for the realization of co-responsibility” says Oduyoye (1990:52).

For a just community to exist, it will be necessary to recognise people's abilities, giving them resources and means to do what they are capable of doing and not base decision simple on the basis of their gender but on the basis of their potentials. Some people have always misunderstood the quest for gender equality, as such see it as a way which women want to rule the world. While some women also misunderstand empowerment to mean fighting with the men but what this study seeks to affirm and advocate for is our common participation in the church which begins with our common baptism in Christ Jesus. These thoughts are in agreement of what Kanyoro and other feminist theologians affirm to be Justice. To seek justice is a command from the scriptures. Justice is not just us! In seeking God-given dignity for women, women also must ask for justice for all other people who are treated unjustly (Kanyoro 1997:181).

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored what are the building blocks needed for the construction of a just community of women and men for leadership position within the church and society. From the perspectives shared by women within PCC and the policy documents of PCC it can be said that, although the Church advocates for gender equality, patriarchal patterns of governance are still very active in the leadership structure of the church. The use of language within the life and work of church still exhibits element of sexism. In describing the duties of the presbytery secretary, moderator, synod clerk, financial secretary, just to mention but a few offices, the PCC constitution still reads "He shall" (PCC Constitution 1998: 20-37). Paradoxically this constitution was revised and approved in 1998 when issues of gender were at the fore front of matters regarding the advancement of the church! This is a clear sign of the depth of conscientization that is needed to transform the church.

This chapter therefore argues for a transformation of the church's mission that makes women empowerment a priority. The chapter proposed partnership built on mutuality and reciprocity as a model for transforming the church's leadership as recommended in the *Church Manual on Men as Partners* by World Communion of Reform Churches and the World Council of Churches. The following are essential building block in the creation of a just community: Created in the image of God (*Imago-Dei*), theology of partnership, Re-reading of biblical texts in the context of gender justice and sexuality, Self esteem and partnership void of misguided competition. The next chapter concludes the entire study and propose a way forward for the mission of the church in the empowerment of women into leadership positions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Introduction

Equality, equity and equal rights are concepts that trigger much debate in communities where people are pursuing justice for their human rights. This is also the case in the community of the church. Women and feminist theologians including this researcher are challenging the church to re-examine those issues that discriminate against women based on their gender in the light of new perspectives on the theology of creation and anthropology. Koinonia and mutuality are cardinal marks in the building of genuine Christian community and where injustices, inequality and unaccountable and disabling power are used to subordinate others then such community goes rogue. I agree with Oduyoye (2001:86) who argues that

In a true communion no voices are left unheard and no God-given charismas are trivialized, or glossed over...Abundant life, it is argued, is that which is natured in a communion where there is participation. Participation, we should note is different from gender-directed, predetermined forms of involvement that most African cultures (*Churches*⁵²) operate. It has no room for subordinations. A church should be a place for mutual caring, sharing of skills and other resources.

The empowerment of women within the PCC has metamorphosed from the missionary era to the present postmodern context. The first chapter outlined a general picture of the entire study vis-à-vis the empowerment of women into leadership position within the PCC. Chapter two followed up with a brief look at the missionary activities with special focus on the Basel Mission and the empowerment of women. Awa (2007) observed that the colonial socio-political system as well as the missionary societies at the time was not accustomed to women's political, social and economic leadership in their home countries and as such what happened in Africa at the time was a partial reflection of women's situation in Europe as well. Adeney (2002:212) affirms that "In most traditional settings women were over looked as leaders. Accordingly when missionaries replaced traditional institutions with modern ones, they did not offer positions to women. In the post-independence period, those structures continued to constrain women". This meant that women's religious, economic, social and political roles were nurtured and developed for strategic leadership within church and society as they were increasingly restricted to domestic and child upbringing functions. The consequences of this policy resulted in patriarchal prescribed sex role in society that

⁵² The word church in italics is mine because not only African cultures do guided and predetermined involvement of women some churches also does the same.

produced differential treatment for males and females. This has resulted to women's low participation in public activities and men's political supremacy and power dominance in structures of governance.

Chapter-three examined the activities of the WWD and WEEP as PCC's instruments for the empowerment of women. The analysis revealed that through these institutions the church has to a limited extent improved on the welfare of women within the church and society. Efforts made by these departments have contributed to the increased number of female elders, and pastors, female workers in the church and increased cooperation between the Christian women and Christian Men fellowship (CWF and CMF) movements. With PCC's heavy involvement in the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, some traditional barriers that hindered the advancement of women have witnessed significant changes. Chapter four focused on women's experiences on empowerment since the launch of the 'Agenda PCC 2000 and Beyond' document. Chapter five presented and analysed findings from the interviews conducted. It revealed that within the PCC, women have been accepted as co-workers with the men.

However the women lamented about their limited participation in positions of strategic leadership where decisions regarding the well being of the church are made. The question: How can the church fulfil its God given mandate of mission as an agent of transformation, was explored in chapter six. The researcher proposed the construction of a just community of women and men in partnership as a model that the PCC can adopt to facilitate the emergence of effective leadership relationship between women and men. Using the WCRC guidelines shared in the manual on *Men as Partners in Promoting Positive Masculinity* the researcher focused on exploring the following issues: the concept of *Imago-Dei*, re-reading of some biblical text in the context of gender justice and sexuality, a theology of partnership of women and men, promotion of self esteem in women and Partnership void of misguided competition.

This chapter concludes by suggesting some pertinent recommendations that involve identifying creative ways and methods for the empowerment of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and tentatively makes suggestions for further research.

7.1 The way forward

1. Take urgent and radical steps to be an inclusive community: The unity of the church can only become a reality if the church works deliberately on the call to be an inclusive community. Inclusiveness is the basis of our common baptism and baptism marks the point of acceptance into the mission of God which is the task of the whole church including women. Swart (1990:148 in Oduyoye 2001:89) argues that “if the church is called upon to continue the servant hood of Jesus on earth then ‘I do believe that women have been called together with men’ to actualize the servant hood role of the church in the world”. Feminist ecclesiolgists like Oduyoye (1990:5) emphasised that “women bring in that which holds the church accountable to being a community that lives the life of Christ, that preaches the reign and love of God by its being and doing in serving God’s people and purpose. This is an example of fellowship (Koinonia) that is approved of and by God and in which God participates”. Therefore inclusiveness should be aimed at as the church does its mission and visioning of what the church is called to be. Ecclesiology goes together with Missiology and the reason for the church’s being is to participate in God’s mission.
2. Empowered women to share their entire God given gifts through the church: Furthermore, if Koinonia is a community of sharing and participation then in its operations, women should also be empowered to exercise their talents for the general welfare of the church. Accepting females to be trained as pastors but limiting their access to power does not reflect true Koinonia. According to Oduyoye (2001:85) many African women theologians like Molee Boame of Zaire opt for Koinonia. Because in Koinonia there is a notion of common sharing which equally means working together, using the best one can give and not according to the limitations that traditions and cultures associate with ones gender .
3. Embrace and promote equal partnership of women and men as a model for church and society: Empowerment should not be seen as reducing or stripping men of power, rather it is the means by which women and men can, in partnership, promote the kingdom values. Biblical understanding of leadership is not individualistic says Sheerattan-Bisnauth. On the contrary it is closely related to gifts of the spirit for the good of the community (2010:135). Therefore, in building partnership of women and men, issues of power relations necessitate frank, open and in-depth re-examination. Without fear or favour the church needs to be more prophetic in addressing issues of power, gender and leadership and should take the risk in demonstrating its wholeheartedly commitment in living out the values that it believes in. The message and practices of the church throughout its

ministry and mission must demonstrate equality and partnership of women and men as a model for the society.

4. Take urgent steps to put into action all policy decisions on gender justice: It is not sufficient to write out costly policy documents and then fail to take the recommendations seriously by not following up on implementing them. The church took quality time to draw up policy documents that were intended to strengthen its life and witness. However from the field work conducted this researcher observed that many of the women had very little idea about the content of the *Agenda PCC 2000 and Beyond* programme of the church and also its 2003 Gender Policy. For women to be liberated they need education which creates awareness of their situation of oppression and domination and this can be achieved only when women are encouraged to engage in critical reading in order to move out of their ignorance.
5. Inclusion of Gender studies into all PCC educational institutions: Another area that calls for immediate attention would be the inclusion of gender studies in the curriculum of the seminary as well as other PCC owned institutions of learning. The seminary is the nursery of the church's teachings and practices therefore it constitutes a strategic asset to equip the seminarians to build an inclusive partnership model of human relationship. Phiri Isabel (1975:53) in her article "Doing theology as an African Woman" observed that:

Gender issues are not dealt with in most African theological institutions. Therefore most of the trained clergy come out of the theological college with an outdated western perspective on gender issues. It is no wonder then that the clergy are sometimes in the forefront of opposing the inclusion of women in the leadership position. Women who have not been exposed to gender issues in the church and society become stumbling blocks to the inclusion of women in church leadership.

6. Encourage and strengthen networking of women: Instead of women struggling to bring down fellow women they should join forces and see how best they can help each other in the advancement of the kingdom. I quite agree with the remark made by Sheerattan-Bisnauth (2010:136) that "to assume that only men use dominant power is to over look the consequences of power. Women are also known to exert control, based on their race, ethnicity, class or their husband's position in the society". This therefore calls for women to equally re-examine their model of leadership towards each other. The issue of PHD⁵³ (pull Her Down) syndrome seem to be very present among the female workers within PCC. Instead of fighting with one another, women should uphold each other in mutual trust and

⁵³ PHD is an acronym (Pull her down) used by women in Cameroon to show the way some women work against fellow women and themselves. This is also another way of saying that the problem of women not participating in leadership is due to lack of cooperation amongst women themselves. Women do not want to have their fellow women at the top or in position of leadership.

understanding that foster their empowerment. The senior women should be helping in directing and coaching the younger generation to be resilient, visionary and striving for excellence in all that they do without wasting their energy on engaging in unhealthy competition with the men. The late Rev Martha Essem once advised the PCC female pastors about the importance of being “who you are” and working according to ones strength said “do it the woman way and leave the rest for God to accomplish it for you. God who creates understand our strength and weaknesses and He [sic] is the one who calls and equips”.⁵⁴

7.2 Conclusion

The empowerment of women into leadership position of the church is a gradual process that calls for consistency, persistency and urgency on the part of the church and women themselves. The study concludes that the PCC can do much more in balancing the gender gap if it follows in a disciplined way the Trinitarian model of leadership by restructuring its male dominating pattern of leadership that permeates its administrative structures. Women should also abandon their position of passivity and servitude, and maximise their strength and resilience for the struggle for building of a just community of women and men within the church and society. It is obvious that this study has given attention only on a limited aspect of the issues raised. Therefore further in-depth research is needed to help the PCC to discover how best to implement its policy documents so that it can fulfil its vision of becoming a just community in which women and men are equally welcomed and supported to be mutual partners in fulfilling the ministry and mission of Christ through his church. The limited time and scope of study has restricted the capacity to accommodate in-depth data collection during my field work. However, it serves as path way for further research in the field of study.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Seventh Annual Female pastor’s conference; February 27th -29th 2004; PC Tiko.

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Minutes of the Seventh Annual Conference of PCC female Pastors & Students Held on the 27th -28th February 2004. Presbyterian Church Tiko in Fako South Presbytery

E) IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS IN THREE CATERGORIES

1) FEMALE PASTORS AND FEMALE WOKERS INTERVIEWED 30TH JUNE TO 12TH July

Rev Ngwateche Angela

Rev Yenchi Florence

Rev Mary Salle Ekinde

Rev Nkwelle Florence

Miss Egbe Grace

2) WWD and WEEP STAFFS INTERVIEWED 7TH TO 12TH JULY

Mrs Ewang Rose

Mrs Chofor Catherine

Rev. Mary Kinge

3) PARTICIPANTS DURING THE CONSULTATION AND SYNOD MEMBERS INTERVIEWED 4TH TO 7TH JULY

Mih Clement Kum

Mrs. Ntuba Beatrice

Mrs. Eneme Grace

Rev. Dr. Joe Set Aji-mvo

The Very Rev.Dr Nyasako-ni-Nku

Appendix 1

Informed Consent

Dear, Rev/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms.....

Greetings of the season from my Supervisors Dr Roderick Hewitt and Prof. Isabel Phiri of the School of Religion and Theology (SORAT), University of KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa and myself Rev. Mrs Atem Gladys Ekone.

I am an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and have served the church for almost 15 years. I have served as a staff of women's work Department and parish pastor interwoven with chaplaincy responsibilities in non-denominational colleges in Cameroon. I am currently engaged in post-graduate studies at UKZN. A requirement of the Masters Degree programme is to write a short theses on a topic that informs society, which may help transform and be beneficial to the academic community.

I have decided to address the issue of empowerment of women into leadership positions within the PCC. The topic of my thesis is: Women Empowerment for leadership within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: A missiological exploration on **Agenda PCC 2000 and beyond: what kind of a church do you want?** This is a focus on issues related to gender justice and will therefore focus on the gender policy of the church. My understanding of the church's mission is one that is rooted in context and that the church is God's missional instrument for the realisation of fullness of life for within the faith community and the wider society.

It is my intention to explore this theme by listening and evaluating the selective voices of women within PCC as they share their experiences of empowerment for leadership since the launch of the Agenda 2000 programme. This will be done through structured interviews of women who occupy strategic position of leadership at the Presbytery and synod levels; those working with women and men in giving pastoral leadership in local congregations and those who were involved in the Agenda 2000 consultation where the above mentioned policy document was drafted.

Your participation in this exercise is optional as you have the right not to answer any question you find undesirable. I want to assure you that your information will be coded and if you do not want your name to be mentioned, then the information that you provide will be used and your identity will not be disclosed. The interview shall be conducted at your scheduled convenience.

If you have read and understood this document and are ready to participate then please complete and sign here below:

I.....

Hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project and consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I so desire.

Signature of Participant

Date

Thank you immensely for your willingness to be part of this project. I remain indebted to your contribution in the realization of this work

Sincerely yours, Rev. Atem Gladys Ekone E- mail: rev.atemwanggladys@yahoo.com Cell +23777493705/ SA +2778020464

Appendix 2

Sample Questions for Interview

These questions are intended for a Masters Research on the topic: *Women Empowerment for leadership within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: A missiological Exploration*; will be submitted to the School of Religion and Theology at the University Of KwaZulu-Natal Republic Of South Africa.

Name.....

Sex.....Age.....

Position occupied within the church.....

Please answer the following questions

SECTION ONE: Women Employed By PCC.

1. How long have you been employed by the PCC?
2. What position do you occupy?
3. What do you understand by empowerment?
4. Do you know about the PCC Agenda 2000 beyond document and its policy on gender sensitivity?
5. In what ways have you/women been empowered by PCC since the launched of Agenda 2000 document?
6. How do you view the representation of women within the administrative structures of PCC?
(a) Well represented (b) not well represented (c) absent
7. What are your expectations of the role women should play in the administrative structures of PCC?
8. Is it your experience that the PCC ensures non-discriminatory practices employment
9. In what ways does the PCC ensures gender justice at the work place

SECTION TWO: Women's Work Officers

10. How long have you been involved in the education and the empowerment of women within the PCC?
11. What are your experiences of gender issues within PCC?
12. What are the ways in which women and men are involve in gender issues?
13. What is your assessment on PCC's policy on gender equality?
14. Is the absence of women in leadership position due to the age old traditional rules and prejudices as asserted in the policy document or are there other factors created by church practices? If so what are they?
15. Is equality of women an unrealistic objective?
16. What is meant in the document that "people generally accept gender issues?"
17. The constitution of PCC "does not allow for segregation between man and woman" Is this what you experience within PCC
18. The stated policy of the PCC is to "Improve the lot of its women through gender policy" In what ways have you experience this improvement?
19. In what ways have PCC sought to "sensitize" the church to change from cultural discriminatory ways against women?
20. What is meant my reasonable quota for women when they represent 70% of PCC membership
21. What are the prospects for women to participate fully in the leadership positions within the church?

SECTION THREE: Those Who Participated In the Discussion on Gender Sensitivity.

- 22 As a participant during the discussions on gender issues what is the church's understanding of gender equality?
- 23 Following the recommendations on Agenda PCC 2000 how many women have been sent for further studies between 2000 and 2010?
- 24 How would you evaluate the action plan and the implementation over the years?
- 25 In your opinion is gender equality an issue within the PCC?

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON



GENDER POLICY

PREAMBLE

It is worth noting that Women comprise about 70% of the PCC population. They are also the most active group, so active that it is common to hear people say, "Without Women, there is no PCC" yet women are few in the leadership of the Church.

To imagine that until a few years ago there was no female Presbyterian Secretary; today we already have one of the 21 Presbyteries headed by a female Pastor. At the level of the Parishes much ground has been covered considering the high rate of female Pastors graduating from the Theological Seminary. Women are also surfacing at the Congregational hierarchy as a result of democratically conducted Session elections.

The absence of women in leadership positions has a lot to do with age-old traditional roles and prejudices which have deprived them of access to equal opportunities. This has brought about gross gender inequality. The emphasis here is however not in equality, which is unrealistic, but on equal opportunity for both male and female members of the PCC.

People generally accept gender issues. It brings completion to the Ministry and makes it more dignified and more participatory in approach.

Whereas the constitution of the Church does not allow for segregation between men and women, the PCC is constrained by the love of God to improve on the lot of its women folk through the gender policy that is presented hereafter.

GOAL

The PCC Gender Policy has as its goal the establishment of an equal opportunity for both sexes amongst its followers.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the PCC Gender Policy include the following:

1. To ensure the education and training of its Christians with an emphasis on the women folk.
2. To ensure the sensitisation of the Christians as to the potential of the women folk vis-à-vis archaic traditional roles and prejudices.
3. To ensure the non-discriminatory practice of employment and appointments to leadership positions of the Church.

APPROACH

The PCC will pursue the following strategy in the implementation of its Gender Policy:

1. Intensifying and diversifying the education and training of its Christians; particular attention is given to the women folk and particularly to the rural communities.
2. Allocating scholarships for its Christians for further studies with a reasonable quota of these for women each year.
3. Including courses in the curriculum on gender issues at all PCC learning institutions as well as running of short courses at the level of the parishes.
4. Carrying out findings and research on gender growth inhibitions with the aim of looking for solutions to them
5. Carrying out effective sensitisation of the masses at the congregations, parishes, Presbyteries and Institutions of the Church.
6. Educating the masses on the changing roles of women in society.
7. Ensuring that the Church does not sympathize with traditional prejudices (e.g. polygamy, subjugative tendencies on women by men, messages and actions biased in favour of men, female Pastors having to follow their husbands, mixing up tradition and Christian values, etc)
8. Offering equal opportunities in the employment and appointment of staff.

This Gender Policy will be reviewed as need arises. If well pursued there is every indication that it will enhance the evangelistic mission of the Church.

**Adopted by the 40th Synod of Transition
Church centre, Mankon - Bamenda
19th - 22nd October 2003**