

Tumekutana

Final Report
December 28, 2007



History and Narrative Summary: Tumekutana began as a dream of some of us at PCUSA who worked closely with the women's leaders of the partner churches in Africa. Though we had the privilege of visiting various countries and meeting the different women, seeing their work, hearing their joys and challenges, we realized that very few of these leaders themselves ever had the chance to do the same. The women often asked, "Are our Presbyterian sisters in other countries facing the same challenges? What are they doing to work against poverty? Does HIV/AIDS look the same in other countries? Are we the only ones suffering? Can you teach me something new that works in another country?" We also saw that women's leaders are often isolated. They are the point person for women numbering 100,000 to 2.5 million, in some countries. They have huge demands placed on their shoulders, in the churches, in their families, and even from us as partners. And yet, where do they get encouragement, support, renewal and inspiration? Where do they find a kindred spirit? These needs prompted the organization of Tumekutana.

In September 2006, it was agreed on in the Africa Office of PCUSA that some sort of women's gathering should be organized for 2007. Caryl Weinberg (a former mission co-worker in residence in Louisville, and current Missions Director at FPC Evanston) was made the point person. She contacted 3 African women's leaders: Rev. Mrs. Bridget Ben-Naimah from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana; Mme. Monique Misenga, from the Presbyterian Church of Kinshasa, DR Congo; and Mrs. Veronica Muchiri, from

the Presbyterian Church of East Africa to form a planning team. Rev. Debbie Braaksma, a mission co worker in Sudan, was also asked to be part of the team. The group, along with Dr. Amy McAuley of FPC Evanston, and Ms. Libby Stinson, PCUSA offices, met in Nairobi Kenya in November 2006. The conference venue, themes, speakers, and schedule were determined. The rest of the conference was organized by email and phone conversations, until Caryl and 2 members of FPC Evanston, Susan Powell and Sonia Bodi, met with Mrs. Muchiri in Kenya again, in July 2007, to finalize the details, and give shape to the workshops. The Rev. Janet Guyer joined the planning team at that time, as well.

It is important to note, that it was the African women who determined the theme, name, speakers and venue for the conference. The Americans, served primarily as advisors, facilitators and support people. They also determined who should be invited to the conference: the Women's Department leaders of each of the PCUSA partners in Africa, plus at least one other woman, a pastor if possible, from that partner church if there was only one partner church in the country. 18 Countries were identified with strong PCUSA partnerships. In the end, Equatorial Guinea did not respond to any correspondence. The Cameroonian women were not able to obtain visas in time. So, in the end, 16 African countries were represented, through 50 official participants, and several more Kenyan "informal" participants. In terms of US visitors, it was decided that each of the Africa Networks could send one representative, though only 3 sent representatives; Presbyterian Women would be asked to send 2; and the PCUSA Africa and International Health Ministries Office – as sponsors – would also send representatives, through office staff or mission co workers. Because FPC Evanston would have a key role in facilitating the conference, they would also be able to send some key volunteers. In all, 18 American women attended. (Please see the directory, for a complete listing of African and U.S. participants.) Content of the workshops was determined by the planning team, but also based on surveys which were sent to each of the African Women, prior to the conference. (See program on the enclosed disk for details of the workshop. The surveys have also been included, listed by country.)

The conference itself has been described in the thank you/cover letter, as well as through the evaluations – which have been summarized and included on the enclosed disk. The program, conference testament, letter of appreciation from the African Women, also give a picture of the conference.

Evaluations were primarily positive. Some of the highlights have been summarized and included in print. Some areas which the women said needed improvement include the following:

- Communications were sometimes unclear. (English was the primary means of communication by email, which made it difficult for some of the attendees.)

- Several women had difficulty getting the funds which were wired to them and needed reimbursement once they reached Kenya. This was particularly a problem in Zimbabwe.
- Though most of the women said that the simultaneous translation between French and English worked well, there were 2 bilingual speakers that thought the translation was not adequate.