

Young Women Enabling Transformation (YWET)

A Concept Note

Women, as a class, are the largest group in the world who are heavily discriminated against. It is as though half the population of the world is oppressing the other half. Discrimination against women is also the most widespread. There is not a culture in the world where women are not accorded second class status. Further, historically, women were the first group of people who were oppressed, making women the class who has borne the chains of discrimination for the longest.

Discrimination against women is manifest and perpetrated through the pyrimidical structures of patriarchy which work to appropriate women's labour, sexuality and fertility. This hierarchical structure is perpetrated through overt violence on women's bodies. Overt violence is found in 'generalized' forms as in domestic violence and the battering of women as well as in forms of gender specific violence such as sexual harassment and rape. Both these forms of violence work together to subjugate women and do not work as separate and distinct categories. In fact the chains of patriarchy are first forged inside the household and the family and women are not safe from sexual violence even the context of the home.

Further patriarchy is bolstered by a whole range of ideologies that draw from as separate fields such as science and theology to justify the oppression of women and legitimize systems of violence and exclusion. In fact while the world has significantly changed, bringing the women's question to the foreground, religion continues to be the bedrock on which patriarchy rests itself. The church in particular remains the last boys club.

Christian theology and spirituality has in the past and continues to provide legitimacy for the second class status of women in the world and in particular to exclude their gifts and talents from the ministry of the Church. There can be no denying that the church has played and continues to play a large, if not fundamental role, in the subjugation of women, in both church and society today.

The vision of the disciples of Jesus was however to create a radical discipleship of equals which seeks to dismantle all hierarchies and over turn all structures of injustices against women. Unfortunately this vision was subverted by the church of Empire which once more sought to re-establish patterns of kyriarchy that centralized power in the hands of a minority elite and offered theological justification for violence and oppression.

As the Council for World Mission, an organization that is committed to resistance of Empire as being the legitimate form of mission in our context today we recognize that the primary obstacle to freedom and equality in church and society is patriarchy and therefore we are committed to its annihilation. However we recognize that we cannot

merely wish patriarchy away and that it has infiltrated our structures, institutions, policies and theology. In an attempt to live out our commitment to justice, we recognize the sinfulness of patriarchy and work towards its deconstruction.

We recognize that this means the commitment of resources and energy towards the constructive work of building a community of women and the creation of a critical mass of women and young women in particular who will work towards the removal of patriarchy and the envisioning of an alternative society.

It is with this vision in mind that we propose a capacity building training for young women that will enable a critical and creative resistance towards male domination as well as contribute towards constructive alternatives. Recognizing the lacuna of young women within our ecclesial structures this training is specifically directed towards the building of a collective of young feminist women in our churches.

Therefore we propose an intensive weeklong training course with the following objectives.

- **To provide a safe and secure space for women to articulate their subordination and aspirations**
- **To provide the tools of social analysis that would offer thirty women a year to be able to critically discern the structures of patriarchy and creatively seek alternatives in church and society**
- **To offer the necessary Biblical and theological skills required to transform male domination in our churches**

It is envisaged the course will explore the following areas:

Gender, Bible, Leadership and Power

- The status of women today: A descriptive analysis
- The Origins of Patriarchy: A historical analysis
- From Patriarchy to Kyriarchy
- Gender as a social construct
- Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Generosity
- Leadership Styles – Jesus’ Methods
- Hidden Texts of Resistance (Bible Methods Study for Transformation)
- Towards a radical discipleship of Equals

We will use critical pedagogical methods including learning by doing, exposures and specific skill content. At the end of the course it is intended that the women would have learned the following skills

1. Tools of feminist social analysis
2. Transformative Bible Study (or Hidden Texts of Resistance)
3. Transformative Leadership

Dates for the Training Course: December 4-8, 2017

Venue: *Will be communicated once confirmed (but will be in Fiji)*

Target Group: Young Women Leaders (preferably 20-40 years)