

Recommendations of the Conference of International Black Lutheran (CIBL) Women at Wittenberg, Germany: October 24-31, 1999

PREAMBLE

By the power of God in Christ we the Black Lutheran women gathered in Wittenberg Germany wish to thank:

First:

The organizers and founders who had the vision for CIBL and called us to be present in this place.

Second:

The Lutheran World Federation and the Division for Global Mission of the ELCA for providing financial resources and assistance with travel; as well as their continued support for women in the struggle.

Lastly:

The Saxony government and her people for the logistical support they provided, the space in which we gathered, and especially for the warmth of their gracious hospitality.

We acknowledge and appreciate our diversity as we exist in the mother continent Africa, and in the Diaspora. It is with deep concern that we register our heartfelt pain for the continued uncertainty of life as a result of the diversity of struggles we have encountered, e.g. armed conflict, violence against women and social injustice, within the African, North and South American contexts. We also acknowledge the emotional physical, psychological and economic upheavals that have affected Black women. These fragmentations within the lives of Black women do not provide for a holistic methodology for ministry.

We recognize the insidious nature of global hegemonic structures which deny Black women their full humanity. We also acknowledge and repent of our complicity with these structures when we oppress one another. Despite our struggles, we are motivated and rejoice at the progress that has been made in the African continent and in the Diaspora, realizing that much work still needs to be accomplished.

As we enter a new millennium, it is with joy and hope that we respond to the call of God to be change agents within the church. Offering our gifts and talents, various perspectives and insights as Black women, we call upon our Black brothers to join with us in this enterprise. We ask them to re-commit themselves to be our advocates and not our oppressors, our allies and not our enemies, and our supporters and not our adversaries. For in doing, so we become true and equal partners in the ministry that God has ordained. Together we will champion and proclaim the Gospel and its dynamic message of freedom and hope for all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the women's plenary, various recommendations were reviewed and the ensuing issues were brought to the forefront. They are: identification and recruitment, education and participation, development and outreach, support and health issues, advocacy, and communication.

I. IDENTIFICATION AND RECRUITMENT

The identification, recruitment, and development of church leaders for the 21st century is critical. As current leaders and theologians we both urge and encourage CIBL to make deliberate efforts in identifying and recruiting suitable and qualified women and youth for such purposes. In particular we propose the following:

- (1) That women and youth be intentionally recruited through local churches, women's organizations, career and vocational development programs, campus ministry, and seminaries for future CIBL meetings.
- (2) That youth be identified through local churches and youth events and encouraged to consider theological education as a vocational expression of their lives, gifts, and talents.
- (3) That Black citizens of the U.S.A. who are married to Latin Americans, South Americans, Caribbeans, and others within the Diaspora who are connected to theological education, be contacted through local churches, synods and regions for possible inclusion in future CIBL events.

II. EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION

CIBL goals and objectives can be realized through meaningful education that can address the needs of women and encourage member churches to use their potential therein. To this end we both urge and encourage CIBL to:

- (1) Provide opportunities for continuing education for Black women in ministry by planning and organizing theological lectures and debates during future CIBL meetings.
- (2) Encourage the participation of Black women in meetings through the presentation and publication of papers on an equal basis with their male counterparts, not only on issues concerning gender, but also in such areas as ecclesiology, theology and ecumenism.
- (3) Support us as CIBL women in challenging one another to tell our stories and seek to publish our thoughts and scholarly pursuits.

III. DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH

The Black Diaspora and the communities in which they exist, need to be continuing priority areas, so that human and financial resources can be mobilized which will help to raise the standards of living for the peaceful co-existence of all God's people. In this regard, we urge and encourage CIBL to:

- (1) Continue to promote cultural exchanges between Africans and Africans in the Diaspora, whether of a scholarly, artistic, or manufacturing nature.
- (2) Continue to develop cultural exchange programs (visitations and student programs) for better understanding between Africans and Africans in the Diaspora.
- (3) Explore the possibility, as funds are available, of opening an art center, museum, or archival collection to display our Black heritage from various areas of Africa and the Diaspora. This will help disseminate our history and tell our stories. Possible sites could include Capetown, S.A. and Chicago, IL, U.S.A.

IV. SUPPORT AND HEALTH ISSUES

It is important for the renewal of one's spirit and to have full participation in the work of the realm of God, that specific attention be paid to supporting Black women in their places of ministry, as individuals, as family and community members, and as theologians. It is also imperative that Black women give themselves permission to nurture themselves and each other in areas and matters of personal health and support. Therefore we urge and encourage CIBL to:

- (1) Facilitate the mentoring of Black women and youth.
- (2) Create structures that can contribute to the needs of Black women who take risks for the sake of the Gospel by confronting oppressive individuals and systems.
- (3) Provide opportunities for leadership that will appeal to women so that they can be encouraged to be more assertive and visible within the church and society.

- (4) Provide leadership training and education for Black women, clergy, associates in ministry, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers.
- (5) Disseminate and share information on health issues affecting Black women throughout the Diaspora, and provide opportunities for increased learning in these areas.

V. ADVOCACY

Because we, as God's people, continue to struggle with the sins of racial and gender oppression and prejudice, it is necessary to set up intentional structures and methods to mitigate against these sins. It is also important to develop ways in which advocacy for and with Black women can be realized. To that end we urge and encourage CIBL to:

- (1) Establish an Advocacy Committee to disseminate information on the role and participation of women in church growth. This committee will also mediate conflicts that arise between women who are taking risks in their local churches and the local leaders
- (2) Provide a way for the voices of Black women in oppressive situations to be heard.
- (3) Provide learning opportunities for Black women and men to understand the role of culture, church and tradition throughout the Diaspora and their impact on the lives of Black women.

VI. COMMUNICATION

If we as Black people, and as Black women in particular, are to continue our collective work in the realm of God, developing effective means of communication in our ever-changing and technological world is imperative. Being sensitive to the differences in development, access to resources, and technological advancements that occur on the various continents in which we live, we both urge and encourage CIBL to:

- (1) Establish an exchange program between African women and youth and women and youth of the Diaspora for the purposes of exposure, learning and training.
- (2) Assist in funding the creation of media houses for periodic contact among Women theologians.
- (3) Support CIBL women as we develop an informational newsletter at

least once a year for update.

- (4) Support where possible CIBL women in the use of telephone conferences and E-mail (computer) systems to enhance communications.

SUMMARY

We give thanks to God as we move forward into the 21st century, strengthened by a vision of the whole people of God, women and men, lay and ordained, and people of every nation praising and glorifying God through their own unique contributions to the realm of God, until Christ comes again.