

ISB Annual Report 2000

The ISB Turns 10

Director, Prof. Gerald O. West

The first quarter of 2000 was spent preparing for our 10th Anniversary celebrations. Anniversaries are always important, both as occasions on which to look back and to look forward. We also chose to use our 10th anniversary to evaluate and celebrate the work of the ISB.

The South African context is a very demanding context in which to work, and there are constant demands on the ISB. The is a community and church service organisation, and so we have to be sensitive to the call of the churches and the community. As our context changes, so the nature of the call to us changes, but by working in local community-based and church-based projects the ISB has learned to hear the changing call. The call that has come to us in recent years, as our previous Annual Reports have demonstrated, has been shaped by the need for theological reflection and training in the areas of HIV/AIDS, unemployment, job creation, theological education, leadership training, addressing violence against women, hearing the youth, restoring dignity to the elderly, and transforming church, community, and educational structures.

In some ways the struggle against apartheid gave a focus to our work, but in this post-apartheid context it is not that easy to find a focus. The ISB works with biblical and theological resources, and so we have tried to keep this as our focus, but we have also had to recognise that the demands on these resources now come from a wide range of needs. This, as I have said, has place considerable pressure on the work of the ISB. Fortunately, we have a committed and dedicated staff and committed and dedicated donor partners, like Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland and Norwegian Church Aid. But the constant demands have taken their toll, and ISB staff and felt the frustration of not being able to meet all the needs made known to us.

It was, therefore, with some heaviness of heart that we began to prepare for the 10th Anniversary. Ten years of work had drained us, but we were determined to celebrate! What we did not expect was that the 10th Anniversary celebrations would restore us and renew our energy in the way that they did. We met over three days, having invited anyone and everyone who has worked with us during the past ten years to come and share with us. We structured the celebrations so that there would be time to look both back and forward, but we did not structure the presentations of individuals and organisations that came to celebrate with us. We left them to say whatever they wanted to say.

And we were amazed. Speaker after speaker stood before us and affirmed the impact of the ISB's work in their lives and the life of their churches and communities. They told personal stories of empowerment, of church renewal, and of social transformation. They encouraged us to keep working, to maintain our focus, and promised to support us in this task. We were greatly encouraged and the weight of ten years of work was lifted from us as we saw God's hand in all of

it. We knew that God would go before us, and many prophetic words were spoken to us in this respect.

The 10th Anniversary Report of the ISB has been completed and will accompany this Annual Report. The 10th Anniversary Report is a remarkable document that recounts the three days of celebration as they happened. You will hear the voices of many people and you will hear the story of the last ten years of the ISB's work.

I was most fortunate to be able to take sabbatical leave after the 10th Anniversary celebrations. My family and I left Pietermaritzburg in early April and I spent the next nine months doing research and reflecting in Chicago and London. The 10th Anniversary celebrations sustained me throughout my sabbatical and I have now returned more determined than ever to continue the important work of the ISB.

In my absence, Rev Malika Sibeko took over the responsibilities of Director, and I want here to acknowledge her and thank her for her excellent work while I was away. Rev Sibeko, who we know as Dix, returned to the Methodist Church at the end of 2000. Her seven years of work of the ISB has shaped our work in ways that are beyond words—nevertheless, I have tried to capture some sense of her contribution in my message to her (via email) which was read at her farewell party.

Malika, there have been many fathers of the ISB; but you are the first mother of the ISB. As such you have brought a unique and very special contribution to the ISB. Your vision, gifts, and strength of character have shaped the ISB; know that as you leave us, we have been indelibly shaped by you and all those who work with us will sense your presence in what we do and how we do it. One of the great strengths of the ISB is that each person who works with it changes it. You have changed the ISB for the better. We can now see things that we could not see before, and we can now do things that we could not do before.

I remember clearly when we interviewed you so many years ago; we saw clearly then that you were someone who would have a significant on the ISB. What we could not see was just how much you would contribute. You have grown, and as you have grown you have given more and more of yourself. You have worked hard; you have taken responsibility and initiative; you have embraced your co-workers; you have enlarged the community of those who are the friends and community of the ISB; you have brought great joy into our lives; you have taught us to sing and dance; you have shown tremendous courage in the face of numerous personal and institutional struggles; you have been a faithful friend; you have been a gift to us, and we will miss you.

The communities you have worked with will tell their own story; but already we know and continue to hear of your faithful service and dedication to them. Empowerment is not just a word to you, it is your work! And this work will

continue wherever you may be.

The School of Theology too has felt your presence; students have been fortunate you have you as a lecturer, and even when you have been silent (as you often are in Staff meetings) you are saying something! May we continue to hear what you are saying to us.

But even as you leave, know this. We will not let you leave completely. We will continue to call upon you and ask for your guidance, wisdom, and strength. You are indeed a strong woman of Africa, and we salute you.

A praise poem

by Gerald West and Beverley Haddad

Malika, strong woman of Africa.
First mother of the ISB;
mother and father to many
throughout this land and across the seas.

We honour your name;
a name known in Azania, Norway, India and beyond.
We make known your courage;
you who stand with the poor and marginalised
with women, with youth, and with the aged.

The walls of oppression tremble at your name;
Sibeko shatters them, and lays them in ruins.
Your smile uproots corruption,
your analysis demolishes domination.
As you move, patriarchy flees before your feet,
and we are all set free.

Dix, the name we sing and dance;
mother of Nthabi, leader of us all.
We salute you and lift up your name;
Go from us carefully and full of grace.
Return when we call; remember us.
And may the God of life go with you.

Dix, our sister, we will miss you!

Looking Back on 2000: Reflections by the Acting Director, Rev. Malika A. Sibeko

The year featured many important moments. All of these events that happened have shaped and challenged us in different ways as the staff of ISB.

First, the year 2000 was a year of celebration because we began this year by celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the ISB. People from different marginalized communities and churches responded tremendously to the invitations from the ISB office. They came to applaud and reflect together on what God has done for “us” for the past ten years. People attended from all over the country, including those who have worked with the ISB and Worker Ministry for the past years. We also had friends of ISB from Norway and Scotland during this occasion.

Second, another important event in 2000 was that one of ISB’s Coordinators, Mzwandile Nunes, celebrated his 50th birthday. This was well attended by projects that the ISB is working with, including special friends whom he had worked with in Cape Town.

Third, a very significant campaign was inaugurated by the Gender Desk: “Breaking the chains of silence”. This was a pilot campaign, which was supported financially by the SACC (South African Council of Churches) (and ISB’s other funders). The ISB is thankful for their assistance and greatly appreciates their support. The aims of this Campaign were:

- (1) To encourage Churches to openly speak out against women’s abuse;
- (2) To promote contextual Bible studies on different scriptural texts that are not always read in most Churches on violence against women;
- (3) To motivate Ministers/Pastors/Mothers/Fathers to preach against abuse on the four Sundays which are part of the 16 days of activism against violence against women.

Fourth, the Director of the ISB, Prof. Gerald West, went on sabbatical leave after the 10th Anniversary till the end of 2000. This meant that each of the ISB Coordinators were to work closely for the smooth running of all the programmes. Even though he was miles away, communication between him and the ISB office was kept intact. It was during this period that the ISB staff experienced the loss of a close colleague closely related to the Worker Ministry Project. Rev. Phambili kaNtloko died a tragic death. It is crucial at this stage to pass our sincere sympathy to the family and we urge them to remember that, “he has run the great race, has finished the course and kept the faith”.

Fifth, it was with delight that the ISB, under the Community Development and Leadership Training Programme managed to meet a specific request from the community. The wish was to translate the *Contextual Bible Study* book by Gerald West from English to Xhosa. In fact, the community took the initiative by beginning to provide their own translation of the English version. Sister Dorcas was the one who initiated the translation process. This has been essential because the communities in rural areas do not have many other resources besides the Bible, and they want to use it in an informed way that is related to their lives. Those who made the request

are the people who do not speak Zulu and who have worked closely with the ISB for the past 4 years. The ISB hopes to find the money to publish the Xhosa version in 2001.

Sixth, aside from contributing to community and church-based work, the ISB is still fully involved in teaching students who are studying in the School of Theology. The Coordinators taught courses on Industrial Mission, Homiletics and Practical Theology. It was in Practical Theology that people that we network with were invited to share with the students, using their expertise and raising issues that concern them. I want to thank people like Ms K. Buckenham for assisting with Gender issues, Dr. Lerou who lectured in Missiology, Dr, S. Rakozcy who lectured on Spirituality and Rev. A. Wright who shared with the students on his experience regarding Church Administration). This has been an essential experience in that it provided a model for integrating academic studies with life in the community. The staff of the ISB also served on various sub-committees of the School of Theology. For example, the Transformation Committee, the Spirituality Committee and Oral History Project.

Seventh, selected students (Student Workers) from the School of Theology had an opportunity to be exposed in the work of the ISB. This has given them the privilege and the opportunity to integrate formal theory received from the classroom with the praxis facilitated in communities of the poor and the marginalized. The main aim for the community based learning project has been:

- (1) To continue enhancing the interface between the university, local communities and churches;
- (2) To provide students with the opportunity to implement and to test theoretical skills from the classroom into local contexts;
- (3) To enable students to develop leadership and facilitation skills during their studies.

At the end of the year, the students reflected on the experienced gained. They indicated that it had been exciting to be part of the ISB and that this has prompted them to look forward at sharing the experienced with the churches and communities which have sent them to the School of Theology.

Eighth, this year was marked by visitors from different places, both nationally and internationally. The following visitors spent time with the ISB:

- (1) It was an opportunity to meet the visitors from Sweden. They were 9 in all. They are working for the Church of Sweden Mission. The main purpose for the visit was their interest to know more about the work of the ISB. They specifically wanted to be informed about the way the marginalized communities/churches read the Bible from their perspective.

- (2) Meeting distinguished friends who have supported ISB from its birth was wonderful. These included funders from Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, Germany. It was in the light of meeting with them that we expressed a need to meet as often as possible and to develop programmes that can enrich us both. They also wanted to meet others of those who have

partnership with, including the Lutheran House of Studies and the School of Theology. These visitors were also briefed about different programmes existing within the ISB. They were also given an input in the light of contextual Bible Study and the methodology behind the contextual Bible studies. They were given the following resources: Bible studies designed by the ISB, but influenced/shaped by workshops held in different communities/Churches; Gerald West's input on 11 Samuel 13: 1-22; Bible studies focusing on the year 2000 from the Worker Ministry Project, together with Worker Sunday Posters; and ISB brochures, which informed them about the aims and the objectives of the ISB.

(3) Our other major funders, Norwegian Church Aid, also visited us more than once this year and this made us feel that we are not just a project which is funded financially from afar, but that they had an interest in the work that we are doing. They also created a space to meet us specifically and it was in the light of this that we are one of their special friends.

We are thankful for the persuasive partnerships that has developed between the ISB and donors. This year has been supported financially by different funders, and it is crucial at this stage to express our sincere gratitude to the Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW), Norwegian Church Aid, Dan Church Aid, individual churches in Norway, and the SACC. Different programmes were able to be implemented in the light of the above support and this has enabled the work of the ISB to be successful. As indicated above, it is the fact that most funders are still predominantly from overseas, and we are very grateful for this ongoing support. Your generous support over the past years and into the future has and will continue to provide skills and empowerment in communities and churches that had been disadvantaged during the past. The ISB Administrator has attached our audited Financial Report with notes for your information at the end of this Report.

(4) In addition to the above funders, Dan Church Aid has indirectly funded the work of the ISB and demonstrated their support for our work, but sending an African student from Zambia to study with the ISB for a period of six months, with the purpose of learning from the ISB's work in the communities of the poor and marginalized. It was a great pleasure to have Rev. Agnes Mulenga with us. She and the staff of ISB have done a critical evaluation of this exchange programme, and we look forward to further links with other parts of Africa through this initiative sponsored by Dan Church Aid.

(5) Students also visited the ISB from Namibia while they were on a student exchange. Most of these students were from different churches, like the Evangelical Mission Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Baptist Church, the Apostolic Faith Mission Church and the Protestant United Church. The students were informed about the work of ISB. They were also given an opportunity to be exposed to different modes of reading the Bible. It was in the light of this meeting (and those mentioned above) that we felt that ISB is having an

impact on different churches beyond the South African context. In terms of the way forward, many of the participating students felt motivated to be part of such programmes as the ISB.

Ninth, towards the end of the year one of the members of ISB, Mr. Mbude who was a Field Worker, resigned. The ISB staff also organized a farewell party for the Coordinator of the Community Development and Leadership Training Desk, Rev. Sibeko. This party was attended by the ISB projects around Pietermaritzburg. Different speakers conveyed words of appreciation for the past seven years. The Director of ISB also forwarded a message and a praise poem via email to bid farewell to the outgoing Coordinator.

The ISB will be filling this post in 2001.

During 2000 the ISB has been deeply committed to empowering communities and churches to read the Bible from their own context. Different programmes of the ISB will present their reports below in the light of workshops held throughout the year.

Community Development and Leadership Training Programme Rev Malika Sibeko Reports

Reading the Bible in a contextual manner at both community and church level has influenced and will carry on influencing the manner in which I read the Bible. The main focus of the workshops designed under this programme has been to enable participants:

- (1) To read the Bible from their own perspective;
- (2) To enable them to read the Bible critically;
- (3) To be able to read the Bible with one another;
- (4) To read the Bible for transformation purposes;
- (5) To enable those trained through regional workshops to train others at parish levels.

Participants of the workshops felt that the approach of the ISB has been reassuring and empowering because their views are taken into consideration. In other words, the ISB approach is participant centered rather than facilitator centered (learner centered vs teacher centered). Participants in these workshops have been provided with different skills on how to run contextual Bible studies.

It is significant at this moment to mention colleagues, student workers, graduate assistants and friends of the ISB who enabled this programme to be prosperous, before embarking on each workshop report. It is at this point that I want to show my appreciation to the following people: Phumzile Zondi, Mzwandile Nunes, S'busiso Gwala, Gerald West, Sanele Khambule, Ntombifuthi Ntshingila, Nwabisa Qungana, Dombo Sinthumule, Gopolang Moloabi, Zodwa

Kutu, Stephina Moeng, Amando Sontange and Thandeka Ndlanzi.

The Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa, Kroonstad

The ISB was requested to run a workshop on Stewardship and Leadership in Kroonstad. This was the first time that ISB was asked to facilitate a workshop in this place. The workshop was held for three days. About 30 members attended and all of them were leaders representing different leadership positions in the church. Their expectations were very challenging, and included the following: they expected ISB staff to enable them to read the Bible in the light of actual contextual needs, to be empowered in leadership skills, to know more about their church structures and to know more about stewardship. The ISB was not able to assist with matters do with their own church structures, but set up a training series to meet their other expectations.

On the last day of the workshop, the local ministers asked the ISB staff to run a Bible study on terminal illness. This was interesting because traditionally Sundays in most churches are allocated for sermons (one way communication) not for Bible studies (two way communication). The workshop ended with the church Council passing a vote of thanks to the ISB staff in front of the whole congregation.

The Methodist Church in Bethlehem

This has been an ongoing project for the past five years with the ISB. We had three workshops on different dates, two on leadership and facilitation and one on women empowerment. The workshop on leadership was designed using the gospel according to Mark 10:41-45. The following questions were asked with the purpose of enabling the participants to respond in the light of the text, context and action plan:

- (1) What is the text about?
- (2) Who are the main characters and what do you know about them?
- (3) Do you know of people in your family, church and community who “lord it over others”, make their authority felt, or want to be served?
- (4) Who are they, how do they do it and how can you positively challenge them in order to make a difference?

The first workshop was attended over Easter weekend.

***** (photo - 1)

Approximately six hundred people attended this workshop. The second workshop was a follow-up, whereby only Executive Members in the region attended the workshop. About thirty people

attended this workshop.

***** (photo-2)

Here the participants were asked to share their experience in the light of positions they held. They were grouped according to their leadership positions (Young Women's Manyano, Young Men's Guild, Class Leaders and Wesley Guild Committee). Some of the interesting issues about the role of the leader raised by different groups were as follows:

- (1) A leader must have a close look of him/herself (exemplary).
- (2) They must be approachable.
- (3) One must be able to delegate to colleagues.
- (4) A leader needs to be knowledgeable and respectful.
- (5) Leaders must not be boastful with what they are and end up being praiseful.

On the last day an action plan was formulated around the question: How can you go about implementing the suggested style of leadership by Jesus? This ended with leaders being given a chance to reflect on their own leadership skills and to propose a plan of action pertaining to transformation.

The last workshop was on women empowerment whereby 109 participants attended and this was on 1 Timothy 2:8-15. This text, most women felt, had been written from men's perspective. Women, they argued, should be respected as equal as men, no dress code should be prescribed by men for women, salvation is for all those women who believe in Christ and not only for those who bear children. Towards the end of this workshop, the women felt that these types of workshops on women empowerment are to be taken seriously by the church and particularly the church hierarchy, which is dominated by men.

The Black Methodist Consultation Regional and National

At a regional level, the ISB was asked to run a workshop over a weekend in Port Shepstone. 219 people who were from different parts of KwaZulu-Natal Province attended the workshop. Participants were introduced to the method behind contextual Bible study and different ways of reading the Bible (reading the Bible itself, reading behind the text and reading in front of the text). An example of one Bible study on rape was conducted. This used the following method:

- (1) The text of 2 Sam 13:1-22 was read.

(2) The theme was introduced: Rape.

(3) Questions were asked, including

(a) textual questions such as: Who are the major characters in this text and how they contributed towards the rape of Tamar?

(b) contextual questions such as: Do you know of a similar situation which has happened in your community and churches? Share it with one another in your groups.

(c) action questions such as: What types of project will you embark on in response to this Bible study in your churches back home?

***** (photo – 3)

After this Bible study, the workshop participants indicated a need to invite the ISB to conduct a contextual Bible study in each of their own churches, given the issues that had been raised through this workshop, and given that they did not yet feel ready to run such workshops in their churches.

Next, the participants were divided according to their different concerns. The ISB was asked to facilitate a Bible study on one of these concerns. We decided to do a Bible study on the issue of unemployment. Thirty-four participants attended this group.

The text read was from Matthew 21:1-19, and the following questions were asked:

1) Share with the group about the specific times and places where people work in your area.

(2) How much do they earn a day?

(3) According to your judgement, how much should they earn? Explain your answer.

(4) According to the Scripture what time do these people arrive at the work area? What causes them to come late?

(5) How do you view the fact that their employer pays them equal amounts, even for those who come late?

(6) What can you do to change the situation of unemployment in your area?

It was in the light of this workshop that participants felt that:

(1) The lesson is that the employers are violating the human rights of the work seekers. They are not given opportunities and a better life in the workplace.

(2) The workers should join workers unions so that their interests can be fought for.

(3) The government's laws should make sure that work seekers' rights are secured.

They also asked the ISB staff to avail themselves when needed in their constituencies.

***** (photo – 4)

Diakonia Council of Churches

The ISB was invited to run a workshop on four different days with an ecumenical church group around Durban (Catholic Church, Dutch Reformed Church, Lutheran Church and Methodist Church). The workshop was attended by about 12 people. The overall aim of the four days of workshops were as follows:

- (1) To enable facilitators from the selected local churches to run contextual Bible studies in their parishes.
- (2) To establish a supportive system by which their experience of contextual Bible studies could be shared.
- (3) To be empowered to read the Bible in the light of economic issues.

Participant's evaluation of the workshop was thus:

- (1) They felt very positive about the workshop and stated that ISB facilitators created a good atmosphere for people to express themselves freely.
- (2) They said that the ISB workshop had offered new and helpful ideas including criticality and action planning.
- (3) They also felt that the workshop should include both theoretical and practical aspects.
- (4) Participants also asked that handouts that contained information from the workshop should be supplied to them.

The text studied was Mark 12:41-44, which participants said was about the widow who gave all she had, about generosity, about giving from the heart, and about commitment and taking a risk. It was read and discussed fully by the participants. As the result of this course it was felt that it is the role of the coordinator/ facilitator to revisit these churches and to observe the work done by the participants. All participants received certificates of attendance towards the end of the year.

Anglican Diocese of Umzimvubu

The ISB facilitated contextual Bible studies in this Diocese for the whole of 1999. It was at the end of the facilitation course that the Bishop, clergy and lay participants felt that the majority of their members needed to benefit from the course, and therefore decided that the workshops on facilitation of trainers be conducted by the ISB regionally (at Archdeaconry level). At the beginning of the year 2000, the Bishop of the Diocese invited the ISB to share with the group of

clergy regarding the manner in which the regional workshops would be facilitated. Four different places were identified and the main aims for all the workshops to be held in these places were:

- (1) To train trainers to train others in different Parishes.
- (2) To empower the leaders with leadership skills.
- (3) To expose them to different ways of reading the Bible in different contexts of life.
- (4) To introduce the participants to the ISB's ways of running Bible studies.

***** (photo 5)

Facilitation workshop in Mount Frere

The workshop was attended by about 30 leaders including 4 clergy and their wives. One was scared that the ministers might dominate the workshop and minimize participation from the other participants. Interestingly, this turned to be positive because at the end people expressed that the presence of their pastors did not threaten them, instead they encouraged them to participate. The expectations were the same as the above-mentioned aims. In addition, the ISB was expected to enable them to create ecumenical relationships with nearby churches. Also, they expected a workshop on conflict management, which was felt needed a special workshop. The following was done:

- (1) The ISB's methodology of reading the Bible.
- (2) The Bible Study on 2 Samuel 11:1-26. Here the participants felt that similar issues, which are in the text, do happen even today. They stated, "Men cannot control themselves". However, there are still those faithful like Uriah.
- (3) The Bible Study on Act 2:42-46 was designed. Here, the participants felt that the text was about sharing, and this means sharing of resources between the poor and the rich, and knowledge between the educated and uneducated.
- (4) Participants were given animal pictures and asked to mention different styles of leadership. For example, the chameleon, the group felt, is very slow and changes its colours in different environments. A leader should be able to adjust in different settings, but needs to stay true in his/her course unlike the fickleness of the chameleon.

***** (photo 6)

During the evaluation session the participants stated that:

- (1) They had learned new ways of reading the Bible.
- (2) They had learned about good leadership skills.
- (3) They had learned that everyone could read the Bible without the help of the minister.
- (4) That two days are too short for all the information gained.
- (5) They assured the ISB staff that they were going to organize Bible study groups and train others in their parishes.
- (6) They agreed that the ISB should be invited to observe during the following year.

Facilitation workshop in Kokstad

Almost 25 leaders met with the ISB in this training of trainer's workshop. Expectations from the participants were comparable with the overall purpose of the regional workshops.

***** (photo 7)

During the first session, the ISB staff explained the four ISB commitments in the light of 2 Samuel 11:1-26. The participants were moved by the methodology and they indicated a need for such Bible study workshops on social and economic issues to be encouraged by church ministers. The ISB methodology on how to design contextual Bible studies was presented during the second session. This was done in the light of the biblical text Luke 17:11-19. The text raised issues that they are encountering in their situations. This challenged the participants because the text was dealing with contextual issues. The third session dealt with the Bible study on leadership. This was highly appreciated by the participants. Coupled with this was a session on group dynamics and different ways of dealing with difficult members in a group. After each session, participants were given an opportunity to share on their experience of facilitating small groups. Both the ISB staff and the participants dealt with problems encountered.

During the last session, participants were given a chance to evaluate the workshop. Members explained that they had learnt to give each other a chance to participate, learnt to be patient with one another (those who were dominating the discussions), learnt to be good listeners and to rotate leadership positions.

Facilitation workshop in Lusikisiki

This workshop was held over the weekend at Goso village, which is a rural village in the Eastern Cape. Although the background is rural the participants were semi-urban as they were relatively literate and the majority had a school-level Biblical Studies background as they are teachers,

theological students (distance learning), retired nurses, business people, to mention but a few. The representation was quite widespread, in that youth and elderly were present, but one obvious aspect was that each of the participants held a position in the church Council or was a trainer in some or another organization in the church or in related church organizations.

Participants attending were Anglican Church members from regional Archdeaconry level. Approximately 30 participants attended the workshop. The workshop programme was similar to the two above. The expectations were divided according to four aspects of life.

- (1) Spiritual issues: Christianity and African culture.
- (2) Social issues: divorce and theft.
- (3) Political aspects: misinterpretation of democracy.
- (4) Economic issues: unemployment and why the poor are poor.

Having ascertained the objectives of the workshop, there was a Bible study on 2 Samuel 11. Questions asked were in the light of these 4 aspects of life. Participants were grouped according to the issues to be discussed.

The ISB staff from the Worker Ministry Project, Rev. Gwala, ran a contextual Bible Study on economic issues. The Bible study was read from Matthew 20:1-19. The participants felt that the text was about employers abusing the human rights of work seekers and that those employed were paid unfairly. In return, the text challenged the participants in relation to the whole issue of “fair wages”; they too underpay people that they working for them.

During the evaluation session the participants stated a need for a detailed workshop on economic and social issues. They also stated that a 2-day workshop is not enough.

Facilitation Workshop in Matatiele

This workshop was held at St. Stevens Anglican Church. About 46 participants attended the workshop. The aims were also parallel to those above. The expectations were similar to the overall aims of the four regional workshops, and there was a similar procedure. The ISB methodology was introduced. Bible study themes on importance to the participants were those of Aids, rape and leadership. The process followed was to conscientize the members on how to facilitate Bible studies. This also included the group dynamic process. Participants were encouraged to take turns at facilitation so that they may all be able to lead by themselves without the help of the ISB staff.

***** (photo 8)

Evaluations were held at the end of each of these three day workshops, as indicated. Participants were divided according to their parishes and asked to evaluate the workshop and to state 2 or 3 things that they will be able to implement beyond the workshop. Some of the interesting issues raised in the light of their action plan were:

- (1) To start Bibles Studies in their parishes.
- (2) To report back to the minister in charge in their parishes.

All the above workshops took three days (starting on Friday night till Sunday) and prayers and the Anglican tradition of celebrating Mass highlighted them all. The ISB was requested by all the regions to make follow-up workshops next year and to observe workshops facilitated by the participants. All the participants received certificates of attendance.

The Methodist Church in Botshabelo

The attendance was positive. The main purpose of the workshop was to introduce to the Methodist Church leaders the following ways of reading the Bible:

- (1) To read the Bible from the South African context of the oppressed, poor and marginalized.
- (2) To read the Bible in community with others from different contexts.
- (3) To read the Bible critically.
- (4) To read the Bible for transformation.

The participants responded with enthusiasm in the light of the above presentation. During the following session the participants were asked to share their ways of running Bible studies. This was done because the ISB does not assume that participants are not knowledgeable on other methods. The following framework, for example, was suggested by one of the groups:

- (1) Opening prayer
- (2) Reading of the text
- (3) Sharing the text that touched one
- (4) Quiet reflection (what is God saying)
- (5) Personal sharing of the text
- (6) Discussion (issues emerging from the text)
- (7) Closing prayer

It was in response to this that we then give an input on the ISB methodology of running Bible studies.

A Bible study on 1 Timothy 2:8-15 was read aloud. This was done in different biblical translations. Towards the end of the workshop the participants suggested the following:

- (1) To give full reports back to their churches and teach others new ways of reading the Bible in their own context.
- (2) To make it their task in light of this text to share with those who preach the word of God in

their churches to reevaluate their understanding of what this text has to say about women.

Methodist Workshops in Sasolburg

The workshop was well attended. The session began with songs of praise and worship. After introductions by both the ISB staff and the participants the workshop began. The theme was on economic issues.

The text was read from Mark 12:40-44. Participants were divided into 3 groups and the following questions were asked

(1) What does this text say to the church in your context?

(2) What is your action plan?

The groups reported back as follows:

Group 1

(1) Members should all pledge, regardless of status; ministers salaries should be paid; members cannot all pay; you don't have to be rich to inherit the kingdom of God; it is the high time that the church should stop concentrating on rich people, but on all regardless of class because we are all created in the image of God; the situation has not changed, those who do not pledge much are still not treated like those who pledge more.

(2) To challenge unfair aspects of the economic systems; to demand to know how money is spent; during drafting of the budget, representatives of churches organization should have a voice; people who cannot pay should not be excluded; the church must organize some projects for those who are poor so that they can stop depending on handouts; the Bible should be read from the perspective of the poor.

Group 2

(1) We still continue to look at people according to their economic status; church leaders should be sensitive to the poor; the dispute between Jesus and leaders (Pharisees and Scribes) is also found in our churches between leaders and congregants and this conflict leads to division in the church; there is no transparency about the financial matters and this leads to church members not paying their pledge; no democracy, no consultation and the poor are unrepresented.

(2) The Church forms an important part of society and therefore should be the watchdog of the society; just like Jesus, the church has the responsibility of educating and bringing awareness to people about social, and economic issues; development structures must be initiated by the church; to have workshops with those of different colour and class; to pay more attention to the poor; the church should protect women especially the widows; must help each other through real fellowship (Act 4:32-34); the church should analyze the situations of its members and then try to raise funds whereby they can allocate the money to the poor.

Group 3

(1) Jesus went into the Temple, therefore we should go back to the church; it challenges us to take note of the poorer people; it challenges the church to take notice of political and economical situations; the text raises the rights of the people both of the lower and higher class; it challenges us on how we use our finances.

(2) Each individual is the church, therefore, they can make a difference; we need to be sensitive to the needs of the poor; employed churchgoers should form a support group whereby they can help the needy; empower the people to talk, act, to protest, to stop giving money for food and presents for the VIPs of the church; to challenge authorities about the misappropriation of funds (a poor fund that is contributed during Holy Communion); to do Bible studies like this to help people to think critically.

The participants indicated a need to invite the ISB again.

The Methodist Church: Wesley Guild Youth Conference in Kimberly

***** (photo 10).

There were about 1000 young people who attended this conference and they were from two different South African provinces (Free State and Western Cape) and Namibia. The theme for the conference was “In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:22-34)”. The ISB were invited to come and do a Bible study workshop. The ISB commitments were introduced and the text was then read in the light of the four commitments (mentioned above).

The text on Acts was read aloud. Young people were asked to read the text from their context and raised questions of criticality pertaining to the text. Some of the issues highlighted were: young people immediately identified themselves with Paul, and saw his aim (according to the text) as to inform the great philosophers of Athens about the unknown God. They saw their mission “in the world” of a context including multi-faith systems and Satanism being that of informing people about Jesus who saves. Furthermore, they also named contextual issues that their own leaders are not addressing like HIV-Aids, rape, child abuse, unemployment, and the representation of young people in the leadership positions.

On the second day, the ISB staff facilitated a Bible study on 2 Timothy 4:10-16. Young people were also encouraged to read this text from their own context and for social transformation. It

was in the light of this Bible study that young people felt that the time was limited and therefore they were unable to engage more with one another during the Bible study process. It was requested at the end that more time should be given for contextual Bible study and young people felt that it was important that the ISB should be invited again for 2000.

Umphumulo Lutheran Seminary

The lecturer of the seminary who is in charge of Christian Education invited the ISB. He asked the ISB to run a two-day workshop with students. 55 students attended the workshop on the first day with the following expectations.

- (1) To be equipped with skills to run contextual Bible study.
- (2) To be able to relate the Bible to the South African context (all aspect of life to be considered).
- (3) To be able to read the Bible with people in the community and churches they work with beyond the seminary context.
- (4) To acquire skills on leadership.

In groups, the students further raised the following issues that affected them contextually: violence against women, children and men; unemployment, poverty and job creation, crime drug abuse; polygamy etc.

***** (photo 11)

A Bible Study followed the above session, focussing on power relations (2 Samuel 11). These issues were raised:

- (1) Students raised critical issues about the text pertaining to the misuse of power, unfaithfulness and greediness
- (2) Towards the end we felt that issues like the one's raised by the text needed to be dealt with by the church.

***** (photo 12)

The workshop continued into the second day with 61 students, and the issues dealt with the

previous day were recapped to put everybody who was there on board. Following this a Bible study on leadership was designed in light of student's expectations. The text was taken from the gospel according to Mark 9:33-35, 10:35-37 and 10:41-45. The students highlighted that the text is about different styles of leadership. In terms of the action plan the students felt that the leaders who are authoritarian need to be confronted, and seminars of this kind are to be conducted. Lastly there was a feeling that the ISB should run this type of workshop in the future because they serve as an eye opener and they enable one to read the Bible critically.

Pietermaritzburg Children's Home (PCH)

This has been the fourth year that ISB has been involved in running Bible study with these young children (between 12 to 16 years of age).

These children raised issues of teenage pregnancy, abuse, drugs, alcohol, smoking, HIV/Aids and self-esteem at the beginning of the year. Their expectation was for the ISB to enable them to read the Bible in the light of these issues and to know what God is saying about these issues in their context. Towards the end they said would share this knowledge with their friends in schools and churches that they are attending.

Contextual Bible Study with Ethos Students

The ISB was asked to run a course for the students of the Evangelical Theological House of Studies (Ethos). This was a one day course and people attending were from different churches, including the Full Gospel Christian Church, the African New Christian Church and the Apostolic Church.

Some of the expectations were:

- (1) To be able to read the Bible critically.
- (2) To be able to preach with firmness.
- (3) To know how to run contextual Bible Study.

It was in the light of the above expectations that the participants were given the task to read the Bible critically with a focus on 1 Timothy 2:8-15. They were asked to raise questions that are problematic to them, to state how this text has been used in their churches and how they can use this text to empower women.

***** (photo - 13)

It was clear that in the light of Bible study that the new ways of reading this text were challenging. Some of the participants commented that other ways of reading this text introduced to them by the ISB were not familiar to them. They had been used to reading this text from a patriarchal perspective.

At the end, the students expressed their appreciation on acquiring different ways of reading the Bible.

The Methodist Church in Thaba-Nchu, Sediba

The ISB was invited to run a workshop with young people. The theme of the workshop was terminal illness and young people. Roughly 60 young people attended from the regional level and it was also ecumenical. The text read was found from Luke 17:11-19. This was read in 4 different Biblical translations. The following issues were raised:

- (1) The text is about people with disease, discrimination, and those who are outcast.
- (2) Contextually, their families and friends ostracize people of such illnesses in their community.
- (3) For the action plan they expressed a need for counseling, encouragement to those living with AIDS and the need to be reminded that they are created in God's image.
- (4) They indicated a necessity for home-based care workshops and for ministers to preach from different texts on AIDS.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA): Cape Orange Diocese

***** (photo - 14)

The participation of the ISB in the pastoral summit of ELCSA was held in the light of the Bible Study facilitated by the Director of the ISB at a SACC conference attended by church leaders in Johannesburg. The ISB was invited to run workshops for three days. People attending were all pastors, deans and a bishop. The overall theme of the summit was "Transformation Towards 2000 and Beyond".

Primarily the Bible study approach was outlined, and this challenged the members. They in return were given an opportunity to contribute and critique the presentation given to them. During the same session the participants were challenged to highlight the pressing issues in the context. They were then asked to prioritize three issues in rank of seriousness according to individual preference. In relation to the issues identified, participants were given a task to outline

a short contextual sermon with AIDS as its theme.

During the next session, the Bible study on 1 Timothy 2:8-15 was read and the three modes of reading the Bible were introduced. Members were divided into groups and the following questions were asked:

- (1) What questions do you have about the text?
- (2) If given a chance to present a homily how would you go about it?
- (3) How has this text been used before this present context?

The discussion concluded with the view that, 'Black cultures' and the way the Bible has been read especially by Black men need to be discussed further. It was also suggested that different Bible versions should be used to help those who are not trained in Greek and Hebrew. Lastly, different issues for the way forward emerged:

- (1) That there is urgency for pastors to conduct Bible studies in an understandable way and this to be done through existing organizations in the Church.
- (2) Church members should be motivated to bring Bibles from Sunday School to confirmation class.
- (3) Bible studies in the light of the contemporary social issues confronting church members should be established.
- (4) That Bible studies pertaining to social issues be assimilated into the Diocese Faith and Order Committee.
- (5) They committed themselves to have Bible studies once a month in smaller groups and to invite the ISB again on a regular basis.

Natal West District Methodist Local Preachers Department, South Coast

This was a one-day meeting and it was well attended. About one hundred and fifty delegates were from Natal West.

***** (photo 15)

The ISB staff began the meeting by introducing themselves and the methodology behind the contextual Bible study process. The 4 commitments of the ISB were explained. The main purpose for the invitation was for the ISB to introduce different ways of reading the Bible to the preachers.

After the presentation, participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and to clarify issues of concern. Delegates mentioned a great desire to invite ISB to their different Circuits to run Bible study workshops that are in relation to the situation.

St. Paul’s Anglican Church, Mohlakeng (Ranfontein)

This workshop was a part of the Tamar Campaign. The workshop was attended by approximately 57 participants and was specifically for the mothers and young people. The purpose behind the mixed group was to enable the parents and their children to talk about issues of abuse together. This was challenging in that in most of our cultures issues of sexual abuse are ‘taboos’.

During the first session the participants were asked to look at the poster and the brochure for the Tamar Campaign and share with one another about the pictures attached.

***** (photo 16)

The response was overwhelming. Some related stories of physical abuse. Others stated that the hands on the brochure resembled pain, suffering, anger, torture, violence, and the action of saying enough is enough.

During the following session the text was read, 2 Samuel 13:1-21, and participants were divided into groups. The issues that came out of this text were the misuse of power, greediness, wife cheating, drink, unfaithfulness, the history of the king’s unfaithfulness, adultery, and dishonesty.

When they were given a chance to evaluate, they felt challenged and indicated a need for more workshops on this theme, but also to include men as well. The priest said that “ the Rector and Parish of the above mentioned church would like to express their heart felt thanks to the ISB for running a workshop for our mothers and our youth group. Our Church is particularly grateful to the ISB for the large amount of work that it has done. The Mothers Union group and the youth group are very pleased with the way the staff of the ISB conducted the workshop and their remarkable insight. On behalf of the Parish, I wish the ISB success in its work”.

Women and Gender Programme Ms Phumzile Zondi Reports

The year 2000 began on a very positive note. The 10th anniversary made us realize the importance and impact of the work we are doing with communities and churches. Friends from the whole country came in to spend the weekend with us. They also shared their experiences of being involved in the work of ISB. They also made some recommendations as to how our work can be more influential. This was a perfect start for all of us. We were affirmed and challenged to continue with the work we are doing.

This desk entered its second year with the challenge of spreading the gender sensitive approach to the Bible to communities and churches. This would not have been possible without the commitment of my colleagues and student workers. I would like to especially thank Rev Malika Sibeko for her support and availability, and our student workers Gopolang Moloabi, Ntomb’futhi Ntshingila and Dombo Senthumule for their assistance and input in the running of workshops. A special thank you also to Sanele Mngadi, for keeping us up to date with invitations and appointments. Without her work we would not have done our work efficiently.

This year with some of our ongoing projects and also new groups who invited us to run workshops on specific issues.

Ongoing Projects

These are women’s groups that we meet with on a regular basis and we have Bible Studies on different issues which are of concern to them.

Sobantu Old Age Club

This is a group of retired people most of whom were professional nurses, teachers and lawyers. They meet on a regular basis and keep themselves busy with hand work like making mats and pillows.

This group is still very influential in community leadership. Issues which are discussed in meetings and Bible Studies are taken seriously by the leadership of the community. In our Bible Studies we have workshops which affect them as old people(most of them are women) and also those which affect the community at large. Examples of Bible studies we have had are on issues like Aids, Domestic violence, rape, incest, the interpretation of the Bible in their churches, how to encourage young people to go to church, death and dying, abuse of the aged.

The highlight of working with this group is the fact that when we identify bodies which have information on issues we’ve had Bible Studies on, those groups are invited in order to give them more information. They have also started inviting young women who are unemployed to our

workshops. This has been positive and has encouraged dialogue between the young and old in the community.

Nxamalala

This is a group of women from one of the Anglican Church Congregations in the Sweetwaters area. This area is about 25km from Pietermaritzburg. The area is semi-urban and was torn by violence in the 1980's and 1990's. Rev Bev Haddad, who is a friend of ISB, invited us to work with this group when she had to go overseas for 9 months. Issues which they were mostly interested in were those on the integration of culture and Christianity.

We had Bible Studies on the role of women in the Zulu culture versus the role of women in our churches and how women were perceived in the Bible times. We also had Bible studies on issues which have been sidelined by churches and their doctrines. Issues like the importance of ancestors, cultural rituals and relationships within families.

Kenosis

This is Lutheran Institution which trains women lay ministers and most of their students over the years have continued to study theology. Our main input is teaching Contextual Bible Studies. Students are trained on how to run Contextual Bible Studies and are exposed to a gender sensitive approach to the Bible. Students are also exposed to women in the Bible. Most of the texts which are used in class are on women and most of these texts are never read in our churches.

Occasional Workshops

These are workshops which are run on invitation. This is important to us because we have no intention of imposing these skills on people who feel they do not need them. When churches or groups invite us we usually encourage them to invite other people from their communities and this addresses the issue of the representation of all levels of society.

The following groups invited us to run workshops on issues of the role of women in the church and examples of women leaders in the Bible.

Appelsboch Women's Group

This is a group of rural women who meet on a regular basis to read the Bible and pray together. This is a very common thing in rural communities where women hold interdenominational meetings on Thursdays. The main problem for these women is that they are not given opportunities in their own churches to preach or lead services whilst they believed they could do

it. Texts like 1 Timothy 2:8-15 had been used to exclude them from leadership positions. We had Bible Studies on Esther and on the Samaritan woman. It was a concern to them that these texts had been misinterpreted. They committed themselves to challenge the preachers to read these texts and together find ways of giving women leadership positions.

Matatiele Women in Ministry Interdenominational

This is an organization whose main objective is to encourage women to fully use their gifts in churches. They organized a women's conference for a whole week. We were given two days to facilitate Bible

Studies on issues of leadership. Most of the women who were invited to these churches came from spiritual churches. They struggled with the idea of interpreting the Bible from our own perspective as women. After two days it was clear that people's lives had changed and they were prepared to go out and empower other women.

Bizana Women's Workshop

This workshop was attended by 70 women most of whom were from the Methodist, Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches. Their main interest was how women can be effective in their positions in their churches. In their churches they said women were encouraged to take up leadership positions but were not given the space to make any changes or decisions. We also had to look at different leadership styles and further discussed ways of making women's issues recognized and taken seriously. It was clear that issues of violence were never discussed in churches. Women were concerned that men were still holding on to traditional and patriarchal ways of reading the Bible. This group committed itself to organizing another workshop for both men and women as a way of empowering men.

Hillcrest Women's Prayer Group

This group of 15 women meets twice a month and they pray for different issues which affect their communities and churches. Ten of the members of this group are teachers and the rest are in other professions like nursing and administrative work. I found this very interesting because more often than not women in these professions tend to exclude themselves from church related community work. I was invited by two members of the group who felt some of their prayers are oppressive and something had to be done about the language they use.

This was more of a general discussion than an actual Bible Study. We went right back to the issue of creation, the image of God and how women are portrayed in the Bible. This meeting was very emotional for the women as they realized how they had internalized negative interpretations

of the Bible and how this has impacted on their lives.

Dondotha, Ministers' Wives Conference

This conference was attended by 35 minister's wives. Most of them were from rural and African Indigenous churches. Only a small percentage was from the mainline churches. One of the reasons why the conference was organized was to look at how churches can work together to improve the lives of their members. Poverty was discussed as the main problem in their area and thus a lot of time was dedicated to the learning of skills which can generate income like crocheting and dressmaking.

I facilitated a Bible Study on Mark 12:38 - 44. This workshop took a day and a half because most of the women were semi-literate. One of the problems that were highlighted was the fact that the Indigenous Churches were looked down upon because most of its members are poor whilst most of the mainline churches also have working people who live comfortable lives. This led to spiritual pride, and churches thinking their theology and doctrines are more acceptable to God. In this Bible Study we concentrated on the issues of pride and poverty. These women also agreed that this is not just an issue to be discussed by women but all members of the churches. They also agreed that this method of reading the Bible had to be formally introduced in their churches.

Umzimkulu Women's Revival

This workshop was very well attended by women from all the churches in the area. The main issue again was the role of women in the church and women in the Bible. We facilitated a Bible Study on 2 Samuel 11:1-27 and together we revisited Proverbs 31. There clearly was tension between the young and older women. This was as a result of older women being the gatekeepers of culture and expecting the young to accept the literal readings of the Bible.

It was very interesting at the end of the workshop when the older women confessed and agreed that they were a product of their times and had never been given an opportunity to interpret the Bible from their own perspective. The workshop took two days including a revival on Saturday evening. All the women agreed to work together in their own churches and teach other women the skills they had learnt.

Greytown Lutheran Church Women

This Lutheran church congregation invited us because there was a threatened division of the women's group. This group is made up mostly of big families where daughters-in-law and their mothers-in-law were in the same church. The topic which was given to us was "The relationship

between mothers and their daughters-in-law. ISB facilitated a Bible Study on Ruth 1. Most women in that workshop had never read that text from their own perspective. Usually the direct implication of that text was the fact that daughters-in-law should live and respect their mothers-in-law.

[picture]

Looking at Ruth's wisdom and the freedom of choice for both daughters-in-law changed the way women had interpreted this text. The younger women had been deeply traumatized by their failure to meet societal expectations. The minister has been working with us to help some of these women deal with these issues.

Hammanskraal Lutheran Church, Majaneng Congregation

This workshop was attended by elders and leaders from eight congregations who wanted skills on how to develop their churches. The reason why this was done by the Women and Gender Desk was the fact that 70% of the leaders were women. This workshop was done on a Sunday which also meant there was not enough time. The text used for a Bible Study on Leadership skills was Mark 9:33-35; 10:35-37,41-45. We spent some time on the leadership styles in the text and how these can be used in our churches and communities.

We also further explored other leadership skills which can be used in our churches. Women also felt that

[picture]

even though they were stronger in numbers, their voices were still marginalized. We briefly looked at 2 Timothy 2:8-15 and questions they had about this text. This challenged all those who were present to be careful as to how they use the Bible.

Youth for Christ Internship Programme

The coordinator of this programme invited ISB to train their interns on how to facilitate Contextual Bible Studies. This was an interesting group of young people from different backgrounds. They were taken through a six weeks programme, we met every week for three hours. The sessions were on the Contextual Bible Study Methodology, The three modes of

reading the Bible, looking at our context and how we can prepare Bible Studies on these issues. All the sessions were lively and exciting the young people on this programme were committed to bringing about transformation in their own churches and communities.

Uniting Reformed Church Youth Conferences

ISB was invited to two youth conferences. One was held in Richmond and the other was held in Mt Frere. In both cases issues given to us were Aids and Rape and how the church can address these in the 21st century. In Richmond we facilitated a Bible Study on Luke 17:11-19 and in Mt Frere we used 2 Samuel 13:1-22. In both cases young people could not believe that there were texts like these in the Bible. Some of them openly expressed their anger that the Bible is full of texts which they can use meaningfully in their lives but they had never been read in their churches. It was also clear that they were not aware how much the issue of gender affected their thinking. In both cases young people felt they had been exposed to important issues and would definitely need more Bible Study Workshops.

Bulwer Methodist Church Youth Guild

This was a regional youth meeting. There were approximately 150 young people in attendance. Most of them were women but the discussions were unfortunately dominated by men. The text that we used for the Bible Study was 2 Samuel 13:1-22. The male participants were adamant that Tamar brought the incident upon herself. They also believed that women who are raped bring it upon themselves by the way they dress or being at dangerous places at night. We spent a lot of time debating these myths. It was also clear that most young women in that workshop were scared to openly voice their objections to some of the issues which were raised. We suggested to the leaders that they should organize a workshop for women only, where they would feel safe and listened to.

The Tamar Campaign

ISB started this campaign with an aim of encouraging the churches to speak out against violence and exposing survivors of violence to the different kinds of violence and how they can deal with it. This campaign was designed in such a way that it coincides with the International 16 days of Activism Against Violence which are November 25 to December 16. The name of the Campaign comes from the text 2 Samuel 13:1-22. In this text Tamar, David's daughter, is raped by her half brother Amnon.

ISB published posters and brochures which were used to promote this campaign. We also ran workshop using "texts of terror". Those churches who committed themselves to this campaign had positive results where survivors of violence came forward with their stories and sought

counseling. We are hoping to develop this campaign further by producing more material and further supporting churches and communities in their attempts to combat violence.

Networking

This desk was also very much involved in other initiatives which were aimed at promoting gender sensitivity and equality in our churches. The Kwazulu Natal Council of Churches invited a group of women to help the council gender its work. Many workshops were held and a final decision of employing someone to empower church leadership on gender issues was taken. The council committed itself to raise money for this work.

We have also worked together with the Church Community Leadership Trust to organize women's workshops on Moral Leadership. This is an important initiative because morality is usually defined by male leaders and this is an opportunity for women to revisit these definitions and introduce new ones which would work best for them.

Together with the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness we organized a women's conference on Economic Justice. Women from Kenosis and Nxamalala attended this conference and learnt about the South African Economic Policies, how these affect women and how women can make a difference.

Conclusion

Years of patriarchal readings of the Bible have done a lot of damage in our churches and communities. The Bible has to be stripped of all these system that have been used to misappropriate it. There clearly is a lot of work to be done in this area.

There is a need for men to be exposed to gender sensitive readings of the Bible. They made it very clear in some of the workshops that they felt rejected and ignored because all empowerment workshops are done with women. Men need empowerment in order to move from the internalized patriarchal readings of the Bible. This is an area in which this desk should be involved. We see this as one of the challenges for the year 2001.