

Introduction of the CBS to CWM (Cluster 1)

Background

Planning for the introduction of Contextual Bible Study to the Christian Women's Ministry of the Cape Regional Synod started in 2022. On 6 September 2022 a meeting was scheduled to discuss the logistics that needed attention for the round of introductions, this meeting was hosted by Rev Stephen Pedro and attended by facilitators and the CWM Executive. At this meeting Sr Lynette Roelfse was designated to assist with the logistical planning.

Following this, meetings were held with Sr Lynette Roelfse and the facilitators on 25 November 2022 and 26 January 2023. In order to ensure that all the presbyteries in the regional synod are reached, they were divided into four (4) clusters. This report, then, accounts for the planning and proceedings of the first cluster's introduction to the CBS project.

At the meeting of 26 January 2023, it was agreed that URCSA Kraaifontein would host the workshop, at its Scotsville church building on Saturday, 18 February 2023. Sr Lynette was pivotal in the logistical planning of this workshop as it pertains to hosting and refreshments.

CBS Workshop

It was expected that participants arrive as of 08h00 (to start at 09h00), however most only arrived around 09h45. As such, proceedings could only start at 10h00. In this cluster six presbyteries were invited to participate in the workshop: Ebenezer, Kraaifontein, SA Gestig, Sarepta, Stellenbosch, and Wynberg. Eight participants were present, representing three presbyteries; these are the presbyteries of Kraaifontein (4), Stellenbosch (3), and Wynberg (1). All participants were Afrikaans-speaking, as such the workshop was facilitated in this medium.

The first phase, 'see', was facilitated by Prop Jayson Gribble. The group of eight were divided into two groups. There were invited to reflect on the challenges that the CWM (in its various contexts, on branch, presbyterial and regional) faces; and, to identify helpful reasons for celebration. Various challenges were listed, these included:

concern regarding leadership and the presence of the minister (in the role as shepherd), the need for restructuring; how to attract young members to the ministry; and socio-economic issues that face communities (such as unemployment, gender-based violence and gangsterism). Quite interestingly, the participants also identified that the continued support the ministry receives from members is great cause for celebration. During this phase, then, the theme agreed upon by participants was 'discipleship.'

The second phase, 'discern' (or judge), was facilitated by Prop Ashwin Thyssen. After reshuffling the two groups, they were tasked to identify a text that speaks to the theme of discipleship. One of the texts were Matthew 4:18–22 and the other Galatians 6:1–9. After discussion regarding the preferred text for this CBS, it was decided (by the casting of lots) that it would be Galatians 6:1–9.

After brief discussion in groups, during the deliberations the various characters present (implicitly and explicitly) in the text were listed. Most intriguingly, both groups foregrounded the 'character' of the reader in this discussion. Meaning, they read the words of Scripture in their respective contexts, displaying a profound awareness and appreciation for the manner in which text may inform their approaches to their contexts. Reflecting on the theme of discipleship, the participants noted their role as disciples in their families, congregation (CWM branches), and communities. Informed by their reading of the Galatians text, they attention was attuned to two important aspects that require focus in their contexts. Firstly, the need for continues discipleship formation; as members of their ministry they should prioritise training programme that sustains their journeys of discipleship. Secondly, Galatians also assisted the group to note the responsibility that they share for others, who may be considered their neighbours – this includes persons not in the faith community.

The third phase, 'act', was facilitated by Prop Jayson Gribble. Given the diversity of contexts present, attention was focused on how one would approach an action plan mindful of a specific context. The developing of an action plan, then, was discussed on a meta-theoretical level – thinking to the challenges that need addressing in each context. This session was held as a plenary. Here participants were alerted to the need to develop action plans that are realistic, tangible, and able to ensure accountability. All the ideas shared during this session, by participants, centred on how the theme of discipleship could inspire the action plan.

Following the workshop of the CBS, a way forward was devised with the participants. Various participants noted their gratitude for the workshop and the willingness of the facilitators. They also communicated their happiness with this form of studying the Bible, using words such as: 'sustainable', 'positive energy' and 'wow.'

Conclusion (and Recommendations)

This introduction of CBS was experienced as most constructive and fruitful by the facilitators. As a way forward, a WhatsApp group would be started for all participants, for the sharing of resources. It was agreed that follow-up session, for the training of facilitators, would take place on Saturday, 10 June 2023. The venue of the workshop is to be determined. Moreover, participants communicated their excitement to share their experiences with other members of the CWM.

For the further planning of the CBS Project the facilitators would like to offer these recommendations. First, as part of each workshop claim forms should form part of the 'toolkit' for facilitation, this would allow for more efficiency in the payment process. Second, communication should be clearer that proceedings of each workshop starts at 09h00.

Facilitators,

Props Ashwin Thyssen & Jayson Gribble

Programme of the Workshop

08h30	Arrival
10h00	Welcoming and Orientation
10h30	See
11h45	Break
12h00	Discern (Judge)
13h00	Lunch
14h00	Act
15h00	Closing and Way Forward

Participants of the Workshop

Name	Congregation (CWM Branch)	Cell-phone Number Email Address
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