

Letter of Introduction to The Unity Women's Desk

In the summer of 1995, a group of women from around the Moravian Unity were invited to participate in the first (albeit “unofficial”) Women’s Consultation held in Kernersville Moravian Church, in Kernersville, North Carolina in the Southern Province of the USA, under the auspices of the American Board of World Mission. Approximately forty women from the Czech Republic, Estonia, India, South Africa, Tanzania, and the Caribbean met together for two days.

Although there was some discussion of equality in the workplace and “glass ceilings,” the discussion soon evolved into basic issues were much more basic: How to obtain clean drinking water; the effects of widespread illiteracy among women; the horrors of violence against women in the form of domestic abuse, rape, and female circumcision; the rampant spread of HIV-AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa; and the resultant growth of orphaned children. Before the end of that first consultation, it became obvious that one two-day meeting was not going to be sufficient to deal with all the issues that women face around the world.

A request was sent to the Unity Synod of 1995 that another such consultation be held to continue the discussion of these issues and ways to deal with them. The request was acknowledged and approved but no funding was given. Nevertheless, a second Consultation was held in 2001 in South Africa, with representatives being invited from all the Provinces with equal representation given to each Province.

At the 2001 Consultation, a resolution was written for the 2002 Unity Synod asking to continue the practice of holding Consultations every five years and initiating an international Unity Women’s Desk to address the issues that continued to plague women around the world. The 2002 Unity Synod approved the idea of continuing the Consultations and initiating the Unity Women’s Desk. No funds were approved for either of these endeavors and no definitive plans were outlined for establishing the Unity Women’s Desk. Fortunately, the women remained undaunted and a third Women’s Consultation was held in 2008. Once again, an appeal was made to the Unity Synod of 2009 to establish the Unity Women’s Desk and to continue to hold the Consultations every five years. Once again the Unity Synod acknowledged the severity of the plight of women in the world and approved the resolutions along with \$500 annually to move the initiatives forward.

Since that time, other considerations had prevented the Unity Board from moving forward with any substantive plans. In the fall of 2010, however, the Lord put it upon the heart of one of the Moravian sisters who attended the first Consultation to volunteer to begin this work. In January of 2011, the Office of the Worldwide Unity approved the proposal made by the Reverend Patricia Garner, an ordained Moravian minister from the Southern Province of the United States, and the Reverend Cicely Athill-Horsford, an ordained minister in the Eastern West Indies Province, to begin this work.

The purpose of the Unity Women’s Desk is the coordination of the resources of Moravian women (spiritual, financial, intellectual, and material) around the world at the congregational level to affect global change by bringing the objectives of women to the attention of the world-wide Unity and by celebrating the women’s successes. The Unity Women’s Desk has focused on disseminating information and finding and implementing resources to work on the following issues:

1) Education

- 2) **Violence Against Women**
- 3) **Employment and Overcoming Poverty**
- 4) **Health Issues of Women and Children**
- 5) **Parenting for Justice**
- 6) **Biblical Imperatives for Justice for Women**

Although other issues may arise in the future, these issues have surfaced as being of prime importance at all three of the Women's Consultations.

The Unity Women's Desk is currently located in Cedarhyrst in Winston-Salem, the Southern Province headquarters. The address is 459 S. Church Street, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA. All donations should now be sent directly to the UWD at this address. The Reverend Patricia Garner is the Coordinator of the UWD. She may be contacted in the office on Wednesdays from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Other times she can be reached by calling (011) 336-725-6413 or by email at Unitywomen2011@gmail.com.

Since 2011, we have been raising money to fund projects that benefit women in the various Provinces of our Moravian Unity by visiting women's groups and senior citizens' groups to raise funds. We have used these funds to provide scholarship assistance to women and girls of our Unity, to make micro-loans to women to start small businesses, to support health projects, and to work for justice for women. All donations should now be sent to the Unity Women's Desk at the address above. Unrestricted gifts will be allocated in the following manner: 40% for educational scholarships, 20% for micro-loans for women to start small businesses, 20% for Projects initiated by women in their own countries, and 20% for administration (including funding of the Fourth Unity Women's Consultation to be held in Paramaribo, Suriname in 2016). We are looking for immediate gifts as well as bequests.

Our website has been developed to assist in disseminating information about the Women's Desk and the work it supports. There are articles about the issues of the women of our Unity, how these issues affect women in the various areas of the Unity, and ways to support this work. It can be found at www.unitywomensdesk.org. It is the hope of those initiating the Unity Women's Desk that through our website we can inform women (and men) throughout the Unity of the needs of women in all of our Unity Provinces/Mission Provinces/Mission Areas and how they may be able to help with their prayers, their financial assistance, and with their support of the projects listed on the website. We want all of our women to be involved with their sisters in other countries as we work together for the good of women everywhere.

There is a need for volunteers to do research, to help coordinate efforts to address these problems, and to help with clerical work from time to time. There is already a Prayer Team in place; if you would like to be part of the Prayer Team, we would be happy to send you a copy of our PrayerList. If you would like to help in any way or if you have questions about the Unity Women's Desk, you may contact Sr. Garner at Unitywomen2011@gmail.com.