



**THEOLOGICAL
CONSULTATION FOR THE
PROVINCE OF CENTRAL
AFRICA**

BACKGROUND

And he said, "How can I, except someone should guide me?" And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. Acts 8:31

The above quote aptly describes the need for theological education (of whatever form) in the church. Philip's response to the need of the Ethiopian Eunuch quoted above, we are told led to the establishment of a church in Ethiopia. While theological education has flourished in the past and has contributed substantially to both church and social life, changing contexts today brings in its wake a number of concerns and challenges for theological education.

While the African continent had once been a place of great theological reasoning and learning, the same cannot be said today of theological education in Africa. Theological institutions and theological education practice on the continent face a myriad of challenges ranging from accessibility, contextual relevance of content, sustainability, disconnection between theory and practice among others.

It is to help understand some of these challenges and develop possible strategies to address these challenges that a theological consultation for institutions in the Province of Central Africa was held in Lusaka between March 11 and 15, 2020.

PARTICIPATION

The consultation in Lusaka brought together four (4) out of the six (6) theological institutions in the province from three (3) of the four (4) countries in the province. Participants came from:

- Bishop Gaul Theological Seminary, Zimbabwe
- St. John Theological Seminary, Zambia
- Leonard Kamungu Theological College, Malawi
- Lake Malawi University College, Malawi

Each institution was represented by three (3) persons namely the Principal, Dean of Studies and a student. Two (2) institutions from Botswana were unable to attend. In addition to the participants from the institutions, CAPA requested the Province to invite two (2) Bishops with theological education background to participate in the workshop so as to feedback to the Provincial synod on some of the issues that would be identified in the consultation.

CONTENT

The four (4) day programme was under the theme “**POSITIONING THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE MINISTERIAL FORMATION**” and discussed issues like:

- **Understanding the current trends of Theological Education in Central Africa**
- **Strands of formation making Theological Education relevant**
- **Responding to the context for ministerial formation**

(A full text of the content of the consultation is attached as Appendix 1.)

Resource Persons for the consultation were:

- Rev. Canon Prof. Joseph D. Galgalo, Vice Chancellor of the St. Paul’s University, Limuru, Kenya
- Ven. Joseph W. Kofi deGraft-Johnson, CAPA General Secretary with 22 years of experience in Theological Education in Ghana
- Rev. Fedis Nyagah- Mwai, Team Leader, Church life Inter and Intra faith relations , CAPA.

To further aid in the facilitation of the conversations during the consultation, each participating institution was requested to make a presentation on the three (3) key discussion areas and to share how they are positioning themselves for sustainability.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE CONSULTATION

After three days of preliminary and group engagements among participants, the consultation concluded with the following:

- All the institutions are struggling to be sustainable. All the institutions have very low enrolment figures with some institutions having faculty numbers outstripping student numbers. Again, all the institutions have very low financial resource base which is affecting staff and infrastructural expansion and development as well as care and welfare of both students and faculty.
- While some of the institutions have strategic plans, none had business plans out of which there could be strategic reflection on sustainability and viability.

- All the institutions have some form of activities to augment their income sources and support the upkeep of students. These activities ranged from crop farming and animal rearing, fish farming and some other related activities. These activities however we noted to be unsustainable and could not guarantee the viability of the institutions.
- It was noted that there was no link between the institutions and the Provincial leadership structure to direct and engineer the focus of theological education within the province.
- There was lack of clarity on the role of the Trustees and their support to the institutions in case resourcing, capacity building and policy setting.
- All the institutions do not have a policy of curriculum review and tracer studies to gauge the relevance of the training offered and the functionality of their products on the job market.
- The need for the development of curriculum and research processes to engages the contextual issues of the church in Africa and the identification of alternative models of theologizing within the African context.
- The need to have links between theological institutions within the Province and with others on other regions was recognized and CAPA was requested to facilitate this process as well as rejuvenate her theological arm ANITHAPAM.
- A communique detaining some of the above concerns was drafted to be sent to the Provincial Standing Committee and the Provincial Synod (copy is attached as Appendix 2)

CONCLUSION

While theological education is a necessity in developing appropriate human capacity for the ministries of the church, there is the urgent need to identify processes and policies that will make existing institutions viable for them to be able to offer contextually relevant and content stimulating ministerial formation practices. The context of the church in Africa is fast changing and theological education must be modelled to prepare ministers for this changing context. To be

able to do this, there is the need for extensive stakeholder engagement at various levels – policy, practice and delivery as well as product functionality levels to ensure that formation processes are relevant and responds to the needs of the church.

