



# Conference on World Mission and Evangelism

*Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship*

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## **Carrying the Cross of the Experience of the Pan African Women's Ecumenical Empowerment Network**

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The Apostle Peter is remembered as a saint who was martyred on the cross for the sake of Jesus the Christ. Our African brother, Simon of Cyrene is remembered as the one who carried the cross for Jesus. These men and other non-African men are often remembered along with a few names of African peoples in church history, but the names and memory of Pan African Woman of faith carrying the cross have often been buried or hidden. Here are the testimonies of just a few of us.

In the Old Testament you may know me as Hagar. I was from Egypt and enslaved by Abraham and Sarah. I was cast out by them to the desert to nurse my child, the son of Abraham. But God delivered us. My name was Zipporah from Ethiopia and wife of Moses. Before we married, my sisters and I gave him water and welcome in a foreign place. I was a bearer of family wisdom demonstrated by my father who taught Moses that sustainable change comes with shared leadership and discipleship of all the people. My name was Saint Josephine of Bakhita from Sudan. I was taken away to be enslaved and to live in Italy but God called my name. I embraced the monastic life and gave prayerful witness to the power of the Holy Spirit and spiritual disciplines that sustains one's life of costly discipleship later referenced by our brother, Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

My name was Sojourner Truth from the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, who posed the question, "Ain't I a Woman?" And the answer came back in the United States' Constitution up until 1865 that said you are 3/5<sup>th</sup> of a white person and you shall be called property. But I knew God called my name as an Evangelist and I kept my Bible close and told the good news of Jesus the Christ and that women of every race and nation matter.

My name is Missionary, Mother, First Lady, Supervisor, Prophet and Prophetess in many churches in Africa and the African Diaspora. We have prayerfully cared for the orphaned, the sick and shut-in, the widowed, those affected by hunger and poverty today and during the periods of slavery and colonialism led by church and non-church leaders. We, who have not only given birth, nursed and raised our children but with non-consent did the same for our colonial Masters and Mistresses and their children. We, deacons and deaconesses, have blessed, anointed and buried broken bodies and spirits of our children after the crucifixion of lynching, war, slavery, police brutality, racism and mass incarceration.

My name is Evangelist while knowing the pain of refusal to acknowledge my call to leadership in roles and titles of Pastor, Minister, Reverend, Priest or Bishop although I know God called me to ordained ministry.

My name is Pastoral Healer in places where I am counted among the 65 million refugees who have left our beloved homes because of conditions like climate change, conflict, war, hunger and poverty that have made my home unsustainable. Yet they call me stranger and alien because I have tried to find a new home in the prosperous countries that have built their economies with the ancient natural resources of my lands and enslaved labor of my ancestors.

My name is the Rev. Dr. Rena Karefa-Smart from the Caribbean, USA and Sierra Leone. I am a scholar and ordained church leader who called the world churches to prayer when I wrote liturgies for the first global assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948. I also carried the processional cross for all of us at the beginning of the global assembly of WCC in Evanston, IL in 1954.

Pan African Women have and continue to bear the cross as disciples of Jesus the Christ. You may not know our names but God does. In the stillness and nightmares of the night and at the dawn of the day, God has called us and is calling us. Are you listening with us? The cross is ours to bear but so is the great resurrection!

“Hush, hush, somebody’s calling our names.... O my Lord, what shall we do?” The Pan African Women’s Ecumenical Empowerment Network (PAWEEN) invites you to accompany us on the pilgrimage of justice and peace.