

Women's Guild Collective Spirituality: Inaccessible Space for Bereaved Elderly Women

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Abstract

This study defines collective spirituality as the coming together of individual Christian women to worship God in one accord, despite their status or cultural differences. The women of the Women's Guild form a community of believers in a communal environment of Christians, where care, connectedness, inclusiveness or acceptance is practiced by all members. Individuals are seen to be connected to self, to others and to God. Through collective spirituality, the Women's Guild has managed to be a church within a church in a predominantly patriarchal structure. This study shows that, while the Women's Guild's collective spirituality has been an integral part of the church in Africa; it has received little attention as a space that is inaccessible for certain women, such as those who can be defined as bereaved, elderly women (BEW). The framework of the accessible God was used to address the question of how the collective spirituality group of the Women's Guild is an inaccessible space for BEW. This case study refers to data gathered from in-depth interviews with 10 members of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Dzenza congregation in Lilongwe, Central Region, Malawi. The findings confirm that the Women's Guild's collective spirituality group is an inaccessible space for BEW. It concludes that BEW have been restricted to accessing God in their private spaces only.

Keywords: Women's Guild, collective spirituality, inaccessible space, bereaved elderly women

Introduction¹

According to Wainaina (2015:71), most churches have powerful Women's Guild groups, which were founded by women in the church. These organisations serve the purpose of conducting various activities that strengthen the ministry of women in the church. Mombo (2002:73) point out that establishing these organisations is a positive accomplishment for women, because these organisations create a space for women to be active in the church; it is within this space that women realise a new status. Phiri (2007:80-81, 99) explains that women achieve a sense of belonging and authority to spread the gospel within a male-dominated space. Haddad (2002:292) calls this as a 'space within the structures of power', because Women's Guild members use this space for 'praying, dancing and singing' (Haddad 2002:102-104). In other words, these scholars say that this space is precious for women, because they are able to participate in spiritual activities freely and collectively. Even though Haddad's research concerning the Women's Guild was in the context of South Africa, in the Vulindlela area, her work is relevant to this study, because both refer to the Women's Guild as involving collective spirituality.

Spirituality is both broad and complex, as argued by Tanyi when she says that, 'spirituality is a broad concept with many perspectives and there is no consensus on the definition of this concept' (2002:50). Even though the word, spirituality, has a broad and complex meaning, Schneider (1989) notes that the word is not limited to Christianity, and can be approached from an atheistic or non-atheistic perception. The point is expanded by Pretorius, when he says, '[i]n Western tradition, spirituality mostly makes reference to something greater than us, such as God, or a Higher Power, or the Divine' (2008:150). However, in this study, the term spirituality will be used in the context of Christianity and will refer to collective spirituality. Although individual spirituality is an important issue for discussion, the focus of this study is on the collective spirituality of the Women's Guild, particularly the Dzenza Women's Guild group. Note that the terms group and organisation are used interchangeably in this study.

Bereaved elderly women (BEW), in the context of this study, are defined as women who are members of the Dzenza congregation in Malawi at

¹ The study is part of my thesis, which investigated bereaved, elderly women via a case study.

the time interviews were conducted to collect data for this study. These are women whose adult children had died due to AIDS-related illnesses and, consequently, they are caring for their orphaned grandchildren in their old age. It is significant for this study that some of these deceased adult children had been the main breadwinners of the family and, as a result, the BEW are caring for orphaned grandchildren with few or no resources. The BEW are, therefore, a financially stressed group, who shoulder enormous responsibilities at this late stage of their lives, often with no help.

In this study, the author examined the Women's Guild's method of recruiting new members and how membership of the group is retained. It is argued that the Women's Guild's method of recruiting and retaining membership should not receive more attention than the marginalisation of BEW. The central question posed, is how is the Women's Guild's collective spirituality an inaccessible space for BEW? To address it, the study utilised research methodology and methods of individual interviews that will be explained in detail in the section of research methodology and methods. The study refers to the accessible God theory in the literature review, followed by a brief background on the Women's Guild's collective spirituality, after which the findings of the study and the discussion is presented, followed by the conclusion.

Research Methodology and Methods

The location of the study is the Dzenza congregation of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi. Dzenza is a semi-rural area about about 15 kilometres from the Lilongwe city centre, and this congregation of the CCAP was chosen as the location of this study because of its accessibility. It can be reached by public or private transport, though parts of Dzenza are accessible only by foot.

The present study used purposive sampling to select participants from the Dzenza congregation. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:49) state that sampling refers to the choice of participants, settings or events that are to be studied. Bearing this in mind, the criterion used to select participants for this study was that they should be able to contribute to an understanding of the Women's Guild's collective spirituality as an inaccessible space for BEW. An explanation was given to the participants concerning the purpose of the study, who the intended participants would be, the methods of gathering data and the importance of the participants giving consent to be interviewed.

In this study 10 BEW participated, four of the participants were caring for maternal grandchildren and six of them were caring for paternal grandchildren. Caring for grandchildren was a purposive criterion, rather than requiring BEW to have lost adult children to AIDS-related illnesses. At the time of the interviews, in 2012, the BEW were at least 60 years of age. Six of them were widows and four were still married; however, none of the BEW was employed. All the BEW were struggling financially, so, they struggled for food to feed themselves and the orphaned grandchildren they were taking care of.

Brief Background on Women's Guild Collective Spirituality

The Women's Guild in Malawi is one of the branches of the CCAP. The Women's Guild members who were interviewed explained that they play various roles in the Dzenza congregation, including activities such as visiting the sick, the bereaved and the lonely, taking care of the poor, orphans and the elderly, and preaching the Word of God. As confirmed by Bam (2005:13), the Women's Guild refers to a group of women organised around prayer and pastoral activities.

The success of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group can be traced to female members of congregations in Scotland. As explained by Pauw (1980), the origin of the CCAP's Women's Guild can be traced to the leadership of female missionaries who started the Women's Guild in 1940. The spiritual maturity of Malawian women is attributed to the teachings of Mrs Elizabeth Murray. As pointed by Retief (1958:80), working with women was Mrs Murray 's heart and soul, and this commitment had a fruitful outcome, in the founding of the Women's Guild.

Phiri (1997) explains that Mrs Murray's success in establishing the Women's Guild was the result of eager responses by Malawian women to the Christian gospel and other Christian faith teachings. In other words, Phiri suggests that, the success achieved by Mrs Murray, while commendable, was only possible with the help of Malawian women who were open to following the gospel and Mrs Murray's teaching. Essentially, without the commitment of Malawian women, no success would have been possible.

According to Phiri (2007:81), the Women's Guild practice of collective spirituality lead members to realise that all women are one body in Christ, and that each member has a different gift (Romans 12:4-8); women are encouraged to use the gifts they have received to serve others. In this study

most BEW were aware of the various roles fulfilled by members of the Women's Guild, and they were aware that support was available to persons who belong to the Dzenza congregation, and outsiders, who were in need of assistance. This is why, when they did not receive the spiritual and physical care they expected from the Women's Guild group, the BEW were disappointed, because 'caring is preventive or sustaining as well as curative', (Ndossi 1994:35). Kinoti (1994:184) argues, the elderly generation deserves pastoral care as much as other people do. This is what Kando, one of the BEW who participated in this study, had to say concerning care:

I would love the Women's Guild to visit me at home and preach the Word of God to me and visit the lonely. When you are in a group where the word of God is preached, life is easy, but when you are alone, you think of a lot of things (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Most of the BEW who were interviewed claimed to receive little or no pastoral care from the Guild. This was confirmed by Sofiya, who stated,

The only help I received from Women's Guild is when they visited me once in the hospital, maybe this relationship will go on (fieldwork interview 2012).

Sofiya expected more care from the Women's Guild, not just one visit in hospital. On the same topic of care, Feliya said,

On this point I should not lie. I have never heard that the church came to a certain area to help the grandmothers (Fieldwork interview 2012).

By church, Feliya meant the Women's Guild collective spirituality group, because they are a branch of the church. Firida had this to say, which implies that she does not receive material help from the Women's Guild:

Women's Guild... oh... spiritually, they encourage us. They tell us that now that we are Christians we need to join the Women's Guild. This is how Women's Guild helps us (Fieldwork interview 2012).

From the female perspective, Ndossi points out that, 'caring should include all services which contribute to the total well-being of a person as a spiritual,

psychological, and physiological whole' (1994:35). Since the Guild consists of a group of women, BEW expected the Women's Guild spirituality group to understand the plight of BEW. As Hislop remarks, 'Women always need other women to come alongside and speak their language: the language of the heart and of feelings' (2003:26). In Hislop's view, no-one understands a woman's experience better than another woman. BEW were obviously of the same opinion, and expected effective pastoral care from the Women's Guild spirituality collective group. The information gathered from this set of interviewees indicates that the pastoral care provided to them was deemed insufficient. They also wished that the Guild's caregiving would cover the physical and spiritual aspects of their lives.

Collective spirituality is at the core of the Women's Guild, and it is an integral part of most Women's Guild organisations in Malawi. Therefore, collective spirituality is taken seriously by Women's Guild members, because it is one of the aspects of their spiritual growth as pastoral care providers. People are both individual and collective beings – Louw affirms 'that a human being is a person through other persons' (2008:41). The individual participants in this study practiced their spirituality in their own individual time and space, for instance, reading the Bible and meditating upon the word of God, praying and singing. However, these individuals long to practice these spiritual aspects collectively with others too, as members of the body of Christ. By doing so, collective spirituality becomes a space in which people are able to connect with each other. As noted by Saha and Safri, 'all people need both connection with others and differentiation from others' (2016:121).

The connectedness of women in a strategically created space is most clearly defined by the Women's Guild's Thursday meetings. 'It is on this day that women have the opportunity to preach and pray with authority and dignity' (Haddad 2000:288). However, in reality, not all the Women's Guild members meet on Thursdays. Furthermore, there are certain requirements that need to be fulfilled in order for one to be accepted as a member of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. These requirements for access to this group will be expanded upon in the next paragraph.

Membership and Requirements

Fundamentally, Women's Guild collective spirituality acknowledges that all women who are in Christ, and that everyone has a gift that she can use for the

glory of God (Phiri 1997:81). Therefore, membership of the Guild is free and open to Christian women who share in the body of Christ and who are fervent about spreading the gospel of Christ (Munyenyebe 2015:121). In spite of being founded on the Christian ideal of inclusivity and having open membership, due to other requirements of the organisation it was and is not easy to become a member of Women's Guild. Phiri (1997:77) explains that, before 1978, if a woman wanted to become a member of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group, she had to inform Women's Guild leaders of her intention to join. Then, the prospective member was asked to attend Women's Guild meetings for a month, under the observation of the leadership of Women's Guild. In 1978 the membership rules changed. Instead of merely informing the Women's Guild leadership of an intention to join, the prospective member had to present a letter from church elders, stating that she fulfilled requirements such as church attendance and monthly pledges. This change was significant.

Financial Contributions

Phiri (1997) explains that, when the observation period was over, the new member was asked to donate three pence. At the moment, the required contribution is K1 000² for *mafuta* – money the Women's Guild collective spirituality uses to run the organisation. In addition to the *mafuta* contribution, women are supposed to make two other contributions as part of membership of the group; Gondwe (2009:20) refers to as *zachifundo* and *zachitukuto*. Phiri (1992:168; 1997:87) explains that, in 1978, the Women's Guild introduced *zachifundo*, which means compassion; and another contribution for *zachitukuto*, which means development. The requirement to contribute financially contradicts the claim made by Phiri that membership of the Women's Guild collective spirituality is free and open to any woman who is a Christian and who partakes in Holy Communion. In reality, membership is not free, because a woman who wants to join the Women's Guild collective spirituality can only do so after presenting a letter provided by church elders, and after paying monthly pledges. Failure to meet the indicated requirements will lead to the person's membership being terminated (Malongosoledwe a

² K stands for Kwacha in Malawian currency, so K1000 is equal to R50 South African currency.

Chigwirizano 2000:18). This is why Kanyoro states that what oppresses women must be ‘transformed or destroyed’ (2001:162).

Uniform

In addition to making the three contributions, the new member is also supposed to acquire a uniform. According to Phiri (1997), since the organisation was founded, a uniform has been an integral part of the Women’s Guild collective spirituality group. This is confirmed by Haddad (2000:282-283), who explains that, when members of the Mothers Union in Vulindlela wear their Mothers Union or Women’s Guild uniform, they feel powerful and they have status and hope. The following discussion is on the challenges faced by BEW.

Challenges Faced by Bereaved Elderly Women

BEW are people who, at one time, had parents, siblings and children. They lived in a community where *Ubuntu* principles of unity, oneness, and connectedness were encouraged. The lives of people who were connected to BEW were like a spider-web that connected parents, siblings, and children to the community at large. However, due to death of the parents, siblings and children of the BEW, the web of life of BEW became disconnected. As a result, this left BEW lives hanging in limbo. as indicated by Kando, who said:

My daughter was a breadwinner. She used to help my grandchildren and I financially. Her death makes me feel sad, because now even if I find money, it is not enough for the needs of the children. I have to pay school fees and use it for other things; this makes me to cry in the night (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Other participants agreed with Kando; Feliya, Msekaimfa, Firida, Mopheje, Edinesi all stated that they cannot afford to buy food and clothes for their grandchildren, because they do not have the money to do so. Consequently, their grandchildren are suffering, and some of them cannot attend school as there is no money for school fees. Gormally (1998) indicates that the socioeconomic situation of BEW worsened as they increased in number, while the income-producing generation was shrinking in size. This is why BEW want to be connected to the Women’s Guild collective spirituality group, so that they

can be cared for both spiritually and physically. As argued by Lopatta (1979) and Ackermann (2001:27), grieving people such as BEW experience their burdens being reduced and their grieving validated when they realise that the community is supporting them by acting as a pillar of strength for them. When the Women's Guild collective spirituality group or community does not act as a pillar of strength for BEW, or provide an accessible space for BEW, most of these women end up living in isolation. Kinoti (1994:184) believes that pastoral care is owed to the elderly generation, because of the huge challenges they face. In this case, the Dzenza Women's Guild members are supposed to provide pastoral care to BEW, because, in this instance, the group members are seen to be the custodians of pastoral care.

Mopheje stated in a fieldwork interview that she stopped attending church, because there was 'no good relationship' between herself and Women's Guild members. As a result, Mopheje isolated herself from the community of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. Msekaimfa is another participant who pointed out that the Women's Guild collective spirituality group did not help BEW. For this reason, Msekaimfa felt that she was being left out, discriminated against and marginalised by the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. Similarly, Sofiya did not hide her sentiments about the way she was treated by some of the Women's Guild collective spirituality members. This is what she had to say:

My desire is for the Women's Guild members not to discriminate against me, as if I do not exist in the church, I really want them not to forget me (Fieldwork interview 2012).

In other words, BEW were saying that they had found, through experience, that the Women's Guild space is inaccessible, spiritually and physically, to them. BEW want to be a part of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group in order to receive pastoral care and support. When they did not receive this support, it caused great emotional strain in their lives. This is why Hislop argues that, 'women in pain are in every congregation' (2003:15). Droege (1967:6) notes that, 'the lonely crowd is found in the church pew', and in this study, the women in pain and the lonely crowd were the women who are described as BEW.

In seeking refuge, the only hope of BEW is the church, especially the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. As stated by Edinesi,

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I am poor. My wish is for the Women's Guild to buy me the Women's Guild uniform or give me money to buy it myself (Fieldwork interview 2012).

This was echoed by Firida, who said,

My desire is to join the Women's Guild so that when I die they should sing at my funeral. That is my desire (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Firida seemed to imply that she wants to be a member of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group so that, when she dies, the women, in their uniforms, would give her a dignified send-off by singing at her funeral. People who follow African cultural traditions believe that when they die, they will meet family ancestors (Mbiti 1969:49). This is why, in some cultures, dead people are buried with food, tools or weapons of war because they believe that, 'their world is invisible but very close to that of the living' (Mbiti 1975:116-117). Some Christians, on the other hand, believe that they are going to meet with the saints in heaven. This is why a dignified send-off, as desired by Firida, is so important, because some Christians view it as a ticket for a safe space in the life that comes after death. Both sides of Christians and African cultural traditions have their own safe spaces, according to their beliefs. This is why spirituality is an important aspect of the lives of BEW. Their faith in God helps them to hold on to the hope that, when they die, they will meet with their loved ones who predeceased them, again.

In grieving for their deceased adult children, BEW adopted spirituality as a coping mechanism. This is one of the major themes that emerged during the fieldwork interviews. For example, Kando said,

I am mostly encouraged by prayer. Sometimes when I am hurt, I just read the Bible and then sing (Fieldwork interview 2012).

This was echoed by Aluni, who said that,

Spirituality helps me to realise my shortcomings. This encourages me to even take my grandchildren to church with me (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Prayer, reading the Bible and other spiritual literature, singing or listening to Christian songs and church attendance were tools that they used as coping mechanisms, to cope with their inner pain (Koskela 2011) Sofiya indicated that,

Spirituality is important to my life so that I should not be weak in my faith. This is why I continue coming to church (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Kando coped with her pain by praying, singing Christian songs and reading the Bible. She found it important that the same spiritual mechanisms are used in group gatherings as well as by individuals; as she indicated by saying,

I would love the Women's Guild to visit me at home and preach the word of God to me.

Women's Guild collective spirituality group is like one big family for BEW. While Kando expressed the desire to have the Women's Guild collective spirituality group visit her at her home, some of BEW said they would like to be part of the Women's Guild Collective spirituality group. Edinesi said,

I am poor but my desire is for the Women's Guild to buy me uniform or give me the money to buy it myself (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Most BEW, despite being spiritually active as individuals, seemed to long to be part of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. The weekly Women's Guild collective spiritual gathering is significant for some of the BEW, because some of them could not read or write. The readings at weekly gatherings by other women are, therefore, important to their spiritual lives. This is why Schüssler says, what is 'life giving must be treasured' (2001: 169).

Findings and Discussion

The accessible God theory is a theory proposed by Jennie Weiss Block (2000). She uses it to recognise people with disabilities within the Christian community. Block calls people with disabilities a unique group of people, not because they are considered to be inferior to those who are perceived as 'normal', but because they are oppressed or marginalised. In this study, the

unique people who are marginalised are BEW. The findings of this study indicate that there is lack of care for BEW by members of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. The three financial contributions members have to make in order to join the Women's Guild, and buying a uniform are burdens to BEW, who are struggling financially, coping with the loss of adult children and supporting their orphaned grandchildren, all at the same time. The Women's Guild collective spirituality group is, therefore, an inaccessible spiritual space for BEW.

Block (2000) states that there the unique group of people, like the BEW, find collective spirituality to be very important to them, because it gives them hope that they will be cared for in their last years and that, when they eventually die, they will meet their loved ones who died before them. The Women's Guild collective spirituality group is organised around prayer and pastoral care activities. The BEW of this study expressed that they are not being cared for spiritually and physically. Ndossi (1994) points out that care should be holistic, meaning that people should be cared for spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, physiologically and financially. Apart from seeking physical care from the Women's Guild collective spirituality group, the BEW also seek collective spiritual care. Kando reported that prayer encouraged her, and that collective prayer eases her life and helps her to avoid thinking of the many things that could trouble her mind. Therefore, BEW use spirituality as a coping mechanism. This is why some of the BEW requested extra prayers to be conducted at their homes by the Women's Guild collective spirituality group, in addition to the usual prayers at church, because collective spirituality through prayer is a powerful tool that helps these women transcend the inner pain they experience due to their difficult circumstances. Therefore, being part of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group gives BEW their identity, dignity, connectedness and belonging, which makes them feel complete.

However, BEW face significant barriers. BEW feel that the collective spiritual space is inaccessible due to various barriers set up by the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. For example, there are three types of financial contributions required of members (Gondwe 2009), namely, *mafuta*, *zachifundo* and *zachitukuto*. These contributions have to be made before a woman can join the Women's Guild collective spirituality. In addition to these financial contributions, members need to purchase uniforms, consisting of a headscarf, white blouse, black skirt and black shoes. Having a uniform is not a bad thing, as explained by Haddad (2000). When members of the Mothers

Union in Vulindlela wear their Mothers Union or Women's Guild uniforms, they feel powerful and the uniform imparts status, hope and a sense of dignity to the wearer. However, buying the uniform is an additional financial burden for BEW who can barely afford to buy food for themselves and the orphaned grandchildren they are caring for. On this topic, Edinesi said,

I am poor. My wish is for the Women's Guild to buy me the Women's Guild uniform or give me money to buy it myself.

The core issue of poverty was echoed by other participants, who asked how they could be expected to find money for uniforms if they were unable to buy food and clothes for their grandchildren. The result is that BEW were excluded from the Women's Guild because they are unable to meet the financial obligations that provide access to Guild membership.

In this study, BEW are women whose adult children have died, and some of these deceased adult children had been the breadwinners of the family. These elderly women, therefore, care for their orphaned grandchildren with little or no resources. Their already difficult situation worsens when they become isolated because they cannot afford to pay the three types of financial contributions required, or to buy the uniform. This core problem concerning the BEW is indicated by Block when she says, 'some of the people of God have been systematically denied access to the structures of the community' (2002). This claim was confirmed by Sofiya, who said,

My desire is for the Women's Guild members not to discriminate against me, as if I do not exist in the church (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Kinoti (1994:184) affirms that pastoral care owes the older generation as much care as other organisations do. Ndossi says, 'caring is preventive or sustaining as well as curative' (1994:35). Without access to the Women's Guild collective spirituality group, most BEW end up isolated and living as lonely, isolated people who receive little or no pastoral care, and burdened by the responsibility of looking after their orphaned grandchildren. This is why Droege (1967:6) points out that the lonely crowd is found in the church's pews.

The information gleaned from this study indicates that the role of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group is to develop the physical and spiritual lives of people in general. The Guild serves to gather women together and to guide them in their spiritual growth. Yet, there is a group of women who

are not able to be part of the collective spirituality group, due to barriers to membership of the Guild. These requirements have effectively blocked BEW from gaining access to and being a part of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group.

Phiri (2007:81) indicates that the Women's Guild recognizes that all women are one in Christ and form one body. If BEW are, indeed, part of the body of Christ, then they should be able to be a part of the collective spirituality group too. The question is, then, what can be done to make the space accessible to them? The participants of this study experienced this problem of accessibility, as have others who long to join the Women's Guild collective spirituality group to receive pastoral care benefits, and dignified funerals upon their deaths.

For the BEW, a dignified funeral is seen as a ticket to heaven, which provides them with hope to meet their loved ones who died before them, again. This hope gives them peace of mind in their last days. This is what Msekaimfa said about seeing her predeceased children after death:

Where my children went, I will also go there (Fieldwork interview 2012).

Msekaimfa, like many other BEW, hopes to see her children in heaven – this belief is based on their Christian faith. The doctrine of her church teaches that death involves returning to where the person came from. As Christians, they believe that people come from God, so, when they die as church members, they return to God.

These are the reasons why Block (2000) urges the Christian community, of which the Women's Guild collective spirituality group is part, to challenge oppressive structures or barriers that exclude BEW from the Women's Guild collective spirituality group. Block states that the oppressive structures or barriers can be destroyed or transformed – this possibility is confirmed by Schüssler (2001:169), who says, what is 'life giving must be treasured'. In concurring with Schüssler (2001), Kanyoro (2001:162) states that, what oppresses women, must be 'transformed or destroyed'. Despite some of the negative elements of the Women's Guild collective spirituality organisation, the organisation itself should not be destroyed; rather, it should be transformed, so that it can be made more accessible to BEW who are in dire need support and pastoral care.

According to Block (2000), it is important for the Women's Guild collective spirituality to use the lens of access and inclusion in order to learn from a God who is unfailingly committed to inclusion, access and love. As Jesus says, all are welcome into the kingdom of God and all have a place (John 14). Block (2000) points out that Jesus did not exclude people according to their nationality, gender, background or physical condition, therefore, there is gospel and pastoral command for the Women's Guild collective spirituality group to apply a theology of access because, 'the gospel of Jesus is a gospel of access, creating access for those in the margin in a Christian mandate' (Block 2002:120). This instruction is confirmed by Swinton (2011), who articulates that, through open access, outsiders become insiders. It is a valid cry by the BEW, who are perceived as outsiders, to become insiders of the Women's Guild collective spirituality group.

Conclusion

In this study, the author has showed that the Women's Guild collective spirituality group of the Dzenza CCAP is an inaccessible space for BEW, because of barriers that have been put in place that the BEW cannot overcome. These barriers come in the form of demands for financial contributions and to buy a Women's Guild uniform. It was found that BEW were often unable to join the Women's Guild; nevertheless, being excluded from the group has not discouraged BEW from having an individual spiritual space. This space results from intuitive knowledge that God is everywhere, and is able to hear their prayers as individuals. It is important that the Women's Guild collective spirituality group revise their current way of recruiting members, and the requirements specified for new members. It should consider that BEW do not routinely have the financial resources to make the contributions that are prerequisites for joining the Guild, and that their inability to meet this obligation means they are excluded. This situation of exclusion runs contrary to the doctrine of the church, which is that it is meant for all people, and that all people include BEW. In order for Women's Guild collective spirituality group to be more accessible for this marginalised group, the Guild should act as a safe space for BEW and find ways of alleviating the financial requirements placed on BEW. When women have access to spaces for themselves as an extension of the church, they realise their status, their identity and their connection with each other, and they develop a sense of belonging that makes

them feel complete. Therefore, there is a need to solve this financial dilemma and make this space accessible to BEW, so that they can experience and benefit from the support and pastoral care provided for by Women's Guild collective spirituality group.

Oral Interviews

Respondent	Location	Date	Interviewer
Kando	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo
Firida	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo
Mopheje	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo
Msekaimfa	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo
Aluni	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo
Sofiya	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo
Feliya	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo
Edinesi	Lilongwe	13/07/2012	Lucy Chibambo

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