



Initiatives of Change

South African Newsletter

July/August 2015

Initiatives of Change Global Assembly

Over a period of four days in July, representatives from Initiatives of Change (IofC) bodies world wide met together at the international conference centre at Caux, Switzerland.

There were four themes for discussion.

- 1) What needs to happen in the world?
- 2) What are we doing, should we be doing and not doing?
- 3) What needs to change in us individually and collectively to fulfill our calling?
- 4) Who should we work with and live alongside?

Some of the sub-themes and questions discussed in small groups were:

Can we lay down our hopes and fears to create space in our hearts?

Trust is the lubrication that makes it possible for the organisation to work.

At the heart of our fellowship is the partnering with the inner voice, the Divine.

President of IofC International, Dr Omnia Marzouk, opened the Extended Global Assembly. "It is perhaps one of the truly remarkable things about this movement that it brings together such a diversity of people who believe in the link between personal change and global change," said Dr. Marzouk.



Rob Corcoran, National Director of IofC USA reports: More than 100 people from 30 countries took part.

The assembly brought together the representatives of the teams and legal bodies of members and associate members of the International Association for a time of fellowship, sharing of experiences and networking.

Dr Marzouk welcomed the participants and marvelled at the many cultures and backgrounds represented in the room as well as the "multiplicity of personal stories, commitment, sacrifice and a real desire to make a difference in society."

She told of a conversation some years ago that she and two colleagues had with the advisor to a senior Iranian ayatollah who lived in the West: "He quizzed us about IofC and we tried to give him the best of what we thought were relevant stories. The more we progressed the more our stories were rebuffed with cynicism, as he still could not fully understand what we were about. At the end, almost in exasperation, he had to admit that there must be something to IofC as he was 'intrigued and interested by whatever had brought together an English Protestant, an Egyptian Muslim and a French Catholic!'"

Dr Marzouk reminded her audience of the key elements of IofC's approach:

- Searching for inner wisdom, "quiet times" for insights and unexpected directions.
- Examining our motives and behaviours, using absolute standards as a starting point of personal transformation.
- Listening to others, honest conversations and an open spirit to build trust within teams and enable partnerships.
- Moving into action to address local and global issues.

"The key thing about our approach is that we try to turn theory into practice and an idea into a 'life lived,' an experience that can make a difference...."

"One of the people who really inspired me when I first met IofC was Kim Beazley, the longest serving member of Parliament in Australia and Minister for Education when I was at school in Canberra. He described the challenge of having a quiet time and looking at his life with 'nothing to prove, nothing to justify and nothing to gain for himself.'

"That sentence has stayed with me all my life and is my check-list for my integrity and authenticity. In the last week before I came to Caux, I passed this sentence on to my coach who is supporting me in

my deputy medical director role. He emailed me a few days later rather excitedly, 'I have tried your code of conduct test - it works!'"

Each day of the Assembly began with personal stories of faith and hope: a former militia leader from Lebanon who is now working for reconciliation; a young Syrian woman who is organizing Creators of Peace Circles in the midst of daily bombings; a Colombian who, with his wife, runs a centre for former prostitutes; and an educator from France who was inspired by young people to develop a programme highlighting the role of children in transforming society. Australians described a sustained process to bring a greater level of trust, transparency and accountability within their own team.

Small community groups met each day to share their experiences and a variety of workshops offered case studies and opportunities for skills building.

Pieter Horn represented IofC South Africa at the Global Assembly, joined for part of the time by Bukiwe Maseko and Cleo Mohlaodi who were at the conference centre heading up the management of the housekeeping and dining room. Pieter writes: "I was very encouraged by the time in Caux, the spirit in which we met at the Global Assembly and the expression of faith by so many. In IofC across the world there is a generational shift, or at least the need for it. In many countries IofC is searching for the next steps ahead."

Creators of Peace Outreach - South Africa

During the last two months Creators of Peace (CoP) activated an additional follow-up programme for participants who have been through a Peace Circle.

At the end of each Peace Circle, participants are asked if they would like more time on particular topics or Peace Circles modules. So far the interest has been in the area of 'forgiveness', 'anger management' and 'stress management'. This has resulted in CoP inviting different speakers to give a more in depth presentation on these topics.

The follow-up event involves spending time together with participants, hearing feedback on how they have implemented decisions and convictions, or what they still find challenging since the Peace Circle. The main speaker then gives his or her presentation and time for sharing. CoP has held five

such mornings around Johannesburg and Ventersdorp. The response has been very encouraging.



Follow-up in Craighall Park – Johannesburg

A few of the comments are: "I always felt my way was right. I am learning to give to God the things I can't change."

"I had a bad relationship with my father. Now we are talking. Now I can call him my father."

"My uncle (who stays with me and the family), drank a lot. I decided to stop judging him. He has now stopped drinking."

Some participants have accepted to be trained as facilitators so they can continue to take Peace Circles into their communities.

In the suburb of Westbury, Johannesburg, Kofifi community radio station daily touches on relevant topics that affect this suburb. Westbury has struggled for many years with high unemployment, gang violence and substance abuse.



Creators of Peace on the airwaves

Denise Msimango (from Westbury) and Portia Mosia were invited to talk on what it meant to them to 'move from unforgiving to forgiving' and how Creators of Peace played a role in their lives. It was very well received. A number of women phoned in wanting to talk and showing interest in participating

in a Peace Circle. This is being planned. (A copy of the interview is available.)

Peace Circle touches the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia

The Creators of Peace team was invited by Coco Kapinga Musampa, a DRC immigrant in South Africa who assisted with interpreting at the CoP African gathering outside Johannesburg last year, to conduct a Peace Circle in Pretoria recently. The group consisted of three men (two being Pastors) and six women. Within the group were DRC, Zambian and South African-born participants.

The day started with prayer. This was followed by discussions. The group was open to learn and increase their knowledge on how to have inner peace. On the first day we explored 'what is peace?' It was pointed out that peace is different for everyone depending on which situation you find yourself in. Some had experienced war in their countries which made it difficult to define what peace is. Most of the participants came from a faith-based background.



Participants at Pretoria Peace Circle

When we looked at the qualities of a peacemaker, they realised that they needed to work more on having the qualities that can build peace. When they took part in role play it was a chance for each one to reflect on their part in how they either build or destroy peace in their own situation. Peace building became a reality.

One of the Pastors shared how listening to others at the Peace Circle, helped him to learn to listen to other peoples' opinions. He said; "I used to argue with people to a point that I would even use some verses in the Bible to win an argument but now I have understood what it means to listen and I have learnt that I have to be humble so that people can reach me." Another lady said, "When I go back I want to reconcile with my only brother that I'm left with since our parents died. I want to tell him I love him and miss him." Another participant who hadn't

been in touch with her mother over a long period realised how much she missed her and felt ready to forgive her.

*Portia Mosia and Jackie Euvrard
Photos: Jackie Euvrard*

Creators of Peace, Kenya

A number of Creators of Peace (CoP) follow-up events have taken place across the east African state of Kenya.

Nyandarua County: "Wow! Not many organizations come back to see how we are faring after they train us." These were the words of Assistant Chief of Gichaka location in Nyandarua county who took part in a CoP follow-up meeting that brought together 13 participants in July. He was one of the few men who has attended Peace Circles. "As a Chief who deals with different people and situations on a daily basis, the training has made my work easier. Inner listening has guided me all through."



Miriam, one of the participants, was challenged by the fact that 'change starts with me' and made a decision to forgive people she had hated for so long. ... "I had to start by forgiving myself from the spirit of self-rejection and dealing with my personality and then I got the strength to forgive others," she expressed.

There is a lot of hope in Nyandarua County with these women in the lead. There is power in committing your heart knowing very well that it is between you and God. Participants made a pledge in which they promised to be peace creators as long as they live, and in a symbolic way they lit candles to show that they were the light of their county.

See more at: <http://www.iofcafrica.org/en/thank-you-coming-back-cop-follow-nyandarua-county#sthash.5b7Pg7x8.dpuf>

Narok County:



"Here in Maasai land we only forgive twice and the third time we react. But we thank God now because what Creators of Peace taught us has changed this negative ideology." This was a comment by one of the 14 women who participated in the CoP follow-up meeting that took place also in July, at Ololulunga

centre, Narok County.



“I never cared about what was happening to my neighbours. After the CoP, I changed and now do whatever I can do to help. I learnt that when my neighbour's peace is disrupted, the entire community shakes.” said Mary.

Excerpts from articles by Annie Gitu & Mumbi Wambugu

Photos: Sam Mwaura

See more at: <http://www.iofcafrica.org/en/we-can-now-forgive-more-twice-cop-follow-narok-county-kenya#sthash.tFZvgsMJ.dpuf>

In Memory

Eileen Russell Page passed away peacefully on the morning of 19th August at the age of 94.

Eileen was born in Ireland of Scottish parents. Through reading a book called 'For Sinner's Only', her father came across the Oxford Group which later became known as Moral Re-Armament (MRA) and now called Initiatives of Change.



He introduced these new ideas into the family, although Eileen and her siblings did not appreciate this at the time! The family home became a meeting place of many from the Oxford Group.

In the early 1940s Eileen had completed her training as a secretary and was working at an office in Dublin.

In 1945, when World War II ended and the Nazi atrocities in the concentration camps became known,

Eileen describes how she was “shocked and began to think much more seriously about the way I was living. It was clear to me that only change in people could prevent this sort of thing happening again. This pushed me into asking God into my life and seeking His plan for each day.”

Peter Hannon writes: “When my father, Gordon Hannon, moved in faith from his leadership in the structure of the Church of Ireland, Eileen was one of those who joined him and my mother in setting up the MRA training centre at Wolfhill, on the edge of Belfast which, during the war, became the base for reaching out beyond the traditional divisions in Ireland. So, as a family, we owe her and others who took such steps in faith with no guarantees, a great debt.”

In 1946 Eileen left her job in Dublin to work as a secretary for MRA without salary. For a while she became secretary to the initiator of MRA, Dr Frank Buchman. She spent time in a number of countries including Britain, Switzerland, Germany, India and the USA.

She wrote of this period of her life, “All was not rosy because I was very self-willed and not really at peace in my own heart. Then one time at Caux (the international conference centre for MRA/IofC) I took part in a play. At the end of it there was a scene with a crowd on the stage and a cross just off-stage. During the rehearsals the director asked each one of us to be quiet for a moment and then decide whether we would walk towards the Cross or away from it. I decided to walk away because it was clear to me that that was what I was always doing. Later I took time to think this out and realised that the big 'I' inside me had to be constantly crossed out – as Jesus had said Himself when facing the Cross, 'Not my will but Thine be done.'”

In 1964 Eileen married Bill Page. They were married for 38 years before he died in 2002. They used their home, whether in Johannesburg, Cape Town or Somerset West, where they later moved, for young and old and inter racial gatherings of people of all races.

*Compiled by Meryl Horn, taken largely from notes Eileen wrote herself.
Photo: Ralph Travers*