

**Account of the International (ICEE) Executive Board (IEB) Meeting
From 9-13 Oct 2006
At Circe Lake Retreat Centre, Houston-Galveston, Texas, USA**

Attendees

Mexico
English Speaking Caribbean
Central America & Spanish Speaking Caribbean
Oceania
South Africa
East Asia
Canada
USA

DAY 1

Mon 9 Oct 06

Opening Mass - Celebrated by Fr Gary Gummershimer

Meeting commenced with Introductions:-

Paco & Mali Rocha – Married 36 years, 23yrs in Engaged Encounter
3 children, 1 grandchild – Present Outline couple

Fr Javier - Priest 33 years, 15 years in Engaged Encounter – Presently in Mexico but would be going to Kenya after Christmas. Priest on outline task force

Fr. Jacinto Rivero (**Mexico**) – Priest for 25 years with 1 year in Engaged Encounter

Luis & Maribel (**Mexico**) representing Regional Team – Married for 23 years, 14 years in Engaged Encounter with four (4) children

Jose & Barbara Salazar (**Trinidad and Tobago**) – Married for 43 years, 16 years in Engaged Encounter with 5 children and 8 granddaughters.

Joseph & Terry Kwok (**Singapore**) – Experienced Engaged Encounter in 1982. Married February 1983 (23 years) involved in Engaged Encounter from Marriage with 8 children, 4 boys, 4 girls – Regional Team East Asia.

Fr Rohan Smuts (**South Africa**) Cape Town – Ordained 7 years, Engaged Encounter 4 years.

Rohan & Ursula Sobotker - Married 13 years, Engaged Encounter 13 years with 2 daughters – Regional Team South Africa.

Fr Raphael Cruz (**Dominican Republic**) – ordained 27 years, Engaged Encounter 14 years. Works in the University's Parish.

Cesar & Gilda Liranzo (**Central America**) - Married 30 years, Engaged Encounter 16 years from first weekend in Dominican Republic with 4 children, 3 girls and 1 boy.

Regional Team English Speaking Caribbean

John & Mary Saxman (**U.S.A.**) – married 44 years, Engaged Encounter 26 years with 2 children who are married and 3 grandchildren – USA National Executive Team with Fr. Bill

Steve & Claudia Schulz – (**District 3 USA**) – Married 30 years, Engaged Encounter 15 years with 4 children – 2 boys and 2 girls. District Coordinators.

Frank & Annette Hume (**Hamilton, Canada**) – Married 32 years, Engaged Encounter 20 years with 4 children and 2 grandchildren. National Finance Couple/District Coordinator/Local Community Leaders.

Fr Terry Runstedler – Ordained 22 years, Engaged Encounter 21 years. Fr Terry considers EE one of the greatest joys of his priestly ministry. Parish Priest of 2 Parishes.

Peter & Paulette Amsden (**Canada**) – Married 38 years, Engaged Encounter 12 years with 2 children both married and 6 grandchildren. 4 years as National Representative.

Greg & Linda Power (**Australia**) – Married 31 years, Engaged Encounter 25 years with 4 children, 2 boys and 2 girls, three of which are married with 2 grandchildren. Oceania (Australia & New Zealand Representative).

Juan Simon/Patricia Maldonado (**Quito, Ecuador**) – Married 20 years, Engaged Encounter 11 years with 2 children, one 18 year old boy, and one 15 year old girl. Statistics Team

Gerry & Anne Bach – Married 33 years, Engaged Encounter 25 years with 2 boys and 1 girl all married and 4 ½ grandchildren. Completing Term as IET.

Fr Gary Gummersheimer – Ordained 27 years, Engaged Encounter over 16 years. IET with Gerry & Ann Bach.

Fr Leonard Alfonso (**Barbados**) – Ordained 20 years, Engaged Encounter 21 years. Involved in Engaged Encounter from Deacon. Trinidad and Tobago born.

Francis & Annette Wattie (**Trinidad and Tobago**) – Married 25 years with 2 children, 1 boy and 1 girl. Involved in Engaged Encounter 16 years. International Finance Team.

Amendments to Agenda

Mass 8:00 am

Breakfast 9.00 am

The Saxmans reported that the ORC comprises a “Chair” team of a couple and priest and representatives from the five districts in the US and their task is to complete the outline revision within 2 years.

It was proposed that the other Regions provide suggestions and inputs to the ORC. The Saxmans requested that feedback be sent within the next 3 months thru’ the IET.

Each region present received a CD with the Survey questions (31 pages) and the compilation of the survey findings (371 pages) to aid us with our suggestions and inputs.

Juan Simon stated that it is ideal that US provides this update to Int’l so that EE becomes truly Int’l. He wants to see formation of weekend teams and a common training formation. A post-weekend program is necessary to convince the young couples to serve.

Mary Saxman shared that a team training document is available from Central Supplies.

Fr Tery enquired if the review would be talk by talk?

Mary Saxman said that the intention of the outline revision would be a complete revision so that the talks will have one flow.

Fr Tery enquired if the US bishops are informed; and will they support the changes?

Mary answered that one priest from each district is on the ORC.

COMMENTS

Vatican Recognition

Juan Simon shared that EE is not included in the list of lay Ministries in the world from the Vatican. And not many Bishops know of the existence of EE and this is a weakness. He suggested that the IET make it their objective to obtain recognition then they can write to Bishops that CEE is a recognized Vatican Ministry. He also said there is a process for application on the web.

Fr Gary supported Juan Simon’s observation as we are not listed as one of the family movements by the Pontifical Council hence at the last family congress in Valencia EE was not invited. He suggested that the US NET apply for EE to be listed through the Episcopal Body of the US Bishops.

Gerry Bach also informed that he was certain that EE will have to pay Vatican taxes when we are recognized by Vatican or registered with the Pontifical Council.

Fr Gary then cautioned that while it is necessary and timely for EE to be recognized each Bishop can still decide what he wants for his diocese.

There was a discussion re: recognition by Vatican as we had no representation at the Vatican council meeting on the family in Valencia, Spain September 2006. Fr Gary advised that membership carried high taxes which we were not able to afford. U.S. should make contact as they have an Episcopal head. John and Mary Saxman have agreed to contact Bishop Skylstadt on behalf of ICEE. A decision would then be made.

English Speaking Caribbean

Presented by Barbara Salazar

Made up of Trinidad & Tobago, Antigua, Barbados, Dominica and Grenada. Guyana & St. Vincent no longer present weekends and St. Lucia is now being approached.

Report of Weekends

Antigua	-	3 weekends
Barbados	-	1 weekend
Dominican Republic	-	3 weekends
Grenada	-	3 weekends held since after Hurricane Ivan.
Trinidad	-	11 weekends 1 Recall

Trinidad and Tobago celebrates its 25th Anniversary of Engaged Encounter in 2007. First Island in the Caribbean to host an Engaged Encounter weekend.

Central America and Spanish Speaking Caribbean

Presented Gilda Liranzo Tavarez

Made up of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic and Cuba.

Number of Weekends	-	51
Number of Couples	-	889

Comprehensive Report attached.

LUNCH

No electricity in the afternoon period.

Ten x Ten dialog, Paco Mali & Fr Javier. Based on Gospel reading of the day.

Regional Reports Continued

South Africa – Presented by Fr Rohan –
3 districts: Johannesburg,
Cape Town
Durban.

Cape Town

Received 10,000 Rands from Archbishop as a result of 2005 Committee Meeting.

Johannesburg

25th Anniversary celebrated with Mass/Cocktail Party.

Durban

Three (3) new junior couples and 1 Priest.

Outline Issues

Started to workshop new Sexual Intimacy talk. They plan to start presenting in 2007

Engaged Encounter is recognized by the Bishops Conference of South Africa.
(Full Report Attached).

Mexico

Presented by Fr. Jacinto

From January this year most of the weekends in Mexico have been shared with the new Outline

New outline made them set a new format to the talks. Charts with name of talk and summary. New question booklets were made for Priest and couples presenting the weekends. New evaluation form was designed to assist in making improvements in Mexico's Engaged Encounter presenting in 30 dioceses. It has not been possible to consolidate in some dioceses where bishops have asked due to lack of finances.

In 2005 four (4) enrichments were held, in 2006 three (3) enrichments were held.

Average attendance 14 – 18 couples and Priests most participants attending enrichment are young couples.

24 – 28 July Programme for Priests was held. 25 Priests attended representing the various regions of Mexico and one Priest from Trinidad and Tobago.

Fourth National Convention was held in Puebla 28 – 30th July 2006. In 2005, one hundred and twenty eight (128) weekends were held in Mexico with teams of 207 and 53 Priests.

Question: From A. Bach – What New Outline?

Answer: In Virginia 3 years ago they had shared the need to change the outline. Fr Gilberto gave them the International outline. They are now on the same outline as everyone else.

Oceania

New Zealand and Australia

New Zealand has one community in Wellington and Australia has three existing communities. Melbourne is no longer functioning. Sydney is strongest community 70% of community is junior couples. They need senior couples. Perth is the second largest followed by Brisbane and Wellington.

In 2005 Sydney ran five (5) weekends with seventy eight (78) couples.
In 2006 numbers dropped to about sixty (60) couples. In 2005 Perth ran three (3) weekends with fifty (50) couples. Brisbane has been struggling with two (2) weekends in 2005 – 20 couples. Wellington recorded two (2) weekends in 2005 with 17 couples.

In terms of expansion, this is not possible as each community is struggling to stay alive.

East Asia Region

Formation of East Asia Region for Catholic Engaged Encounter

In January 2002, the three communities Manila, Penang and Singapore were recognized by the International Executive Board as a regional grouping and named East Asia.

Joseph & Terri Kwok and Rev Fr Ambrose Vaz are the East Asia Liaison Team.

All three communities have experimented with follow-up programs but have not been successful in attracting past participants to these programs.

What Singapore has always tried to do is have sub-committees to keep in touch with couples and involve them in the weekend organization and preparation.

Married Sexual Intimacy (MSI) Outline.

East Asia received the new MSI Outline only in August 2006. East Asia requested that the minutes record such Outline changes be sent promptly to the regions. Each community will do their utmost to complete the re-writing of their presenting teams.

Planned Outreach

Community	Manila	Penang	Singapore
Planned Outreach	The Philippine Military Ordinariate and Cebu Diocese have requested CEE to conduct the program; no definite schedule.	Two outreach weekends have been made in the state of Perak on the mainland (under the Penang Diocese) and efforts are ongoing for them to have their own weekends.	Continue to be at the service of the region and assist the EALT with outreach to Jakarta; Korea, Japan, Guam and possibly Hong Kong.

3rd East Asia Conference (EAC), Sep 15-17 2006, Singapore

Our recent East Asia Conference was held in Singapore from 15-17 September. We were honored to have with us Ann Bach and Fr Gary during the conference.

Next EAC

The 4th EAC is planned to be held in Penang in July 2008, to coincide with the 25th Anniversary of CEE Penang.

Canada – Presented by Paulette Amsden

Canada hosted convention in August 2005. Several couples from the U.S. attended. They are preparing to host Committee Meeting for the period 1st – 5th October 2007 in Niagara Falls. There is a decline in the number of couples registering. (**see complete report attached**)

Struggles

1. Engaged Encounter is not the recommended preparation programme in any Diocese.
2. Rising costs of venue and some suitable venues are closing. Sydney supports Brisbane with \$1,000. Received from Archbishop of Sydney.

Most communities are experiencing difficulties in recruiting team couples. Sydney has difficulty getting priests. Recently recruited new priest Fr Stuart Paul.

Issue from participants is the change in the demographics of couples and the issues they bring to the weekend e.g. past relationship, children entering the new marriage.

1. Closing Prayers by Paco & Mali Rocha
2. Dinner

DAY 3

Wednesday 11th October

Mass celebrated by Fr. Leonard Alfonso (Votive Mass of St. Joseph)
Homily celebrated fatherhood.

Report by Statistics (Stats)

Presented by Juan Simon & Patricia Maldonado

The Statistics Team is still proposing to create an ICEE website where regions can enter to update their statistics.

However, this was put on hold as the IET did not feel the need to provide any budget for this. (Complete report attached).

Comment

Fr Terry Thanked Juan Simon & Patricia for the Friday prayer, but highlighted that in translation there was some confusion. He presented a reworded prayer in English and shared it with the board.

Amendments

Our patron is the holy family but no mention made of St Joseph amended to include St. Joseph. Amended version accepted and attached. Paco is to translate into Spanish.

Relations with ME

Gerry & Ann were at the ME Int'l convention in July in Austin. And they met with the ME leadership and made it clear that any community not using the ICEE Outline should not call itself CEE.

Joseph & Terri asked if we could approach Indonesia and Korea on this basis.

Gerry explained that on the ME website there is a statement that ME, EE & RTV are independent of each other.

Report by Finance & Secretariat (Francis & Annette Wattie & Fr. Leonard)

Francis & Annette shared that the number of US participants has dropped by about 25% and the challenge of the new IET is to raise funds. Appealed to regions to keep up their contributions of USD1 per couple from their weekends.

They also explained that they would prefer about 6 weeks notice to process and fulfill any request for financial assistance, so as to facilitate postage

Finance Team proposed a resolution to raise to USD2 per couple. This proposal was not seconded as most communities would continue to try to meet the USD1 contributions, and it was left to the regions/communities to determine how much they can contribute.

Steve Schulz elaborated that at present USD11 contribution is drawn from the weekend cost from each couple on US weekends and this is the breakdown:

- USD8 is channeled to the national community,
- USD2 to the district (region)
- USD1 goes to Int'l

IET also informed that ICEE is featured in Horizons where we appeal for support in funding.

Fr Gary expressed his thanks to the Board for its support and said his goodbyes.

A presentation was made of pictures of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Jerry & Ann & Fr. Gary.

LUNCH – During lunch the committee met to discuss request for assistance.

Report by Outline and Weekend Resources (O&WR)

Paco & Mali reported that the Spanish-speaking communities have an Enrichment Program to prepare presenting couples and Priests and they have an Outline in Spanish for this.

Steve & Claudia reported that their District has material for a Workshop Training Day for preparing presenting teams.

We were presented with a CD of the material.

OTHER MATTERS

Married Sexual Intimacy (MSI)

Francis & Annette referred to the Resolution from the 2005 meeting that the new “Married Sexual Intimacy” talk be written in one year, and informed all present that not all their teams have written this talk.

Other communities expressed the difficulty with MSI that it came across as preachy, and that the team felt that the couples would look at the team couples and examine if they were living up to the ideals being expressed in the talk.

Gerry & Ann shared that they had written and presented this talk and the senior is the “preacher” and the junior gives the lived examples.

It was suggested that the MSI Outline be re-written as part of the Outline review by the US.

Since this would take some time, IET encouraged communities to listen to Christopher West's "Theology of the Body" (ToB) or get experts to help teams understand this better. There is also a book "Theology of the Body for Beginners" that teams could read if they preferred.

Most present also requested more time from one year to two years to assimilate "Theology of the Body" as teams have to assimilate it, including Priests and it needs reflections.

There was also a suggestion that teams who have written this talk remove the names from their talk and share this talk with other communities as a resource to workshop this talk. Communities would liaise with each other.

Fr Gary asked that we do not rush into it but give it some time to 'grow on you'. He found that this worked in his personal experience.

After lengthy discussion the following was decided:-

Resolution

The Next year would be spent improving our knowledge of the teachings of theology of the body in preparation for implementation. Communities who may wish to write before the deadline are free to do so.

DAY 4

Mass celebrated by

Handbook Issues

Article 4 – Term of Office

It was proposed by Juan-Simon that Teams serving on the Executive Committee be restricted to only one 3-yr term; seconded by Fr Tery.

The Decision: One for; the rest against. Hence this decision did not stand.

It was proposed by Juan-Simon that terms of reference be drawn up for each team serving on the Executive Committee; seconded by Fr Tery.

Decision: Unanimous. Hence the next Executive Committee will draft some terms of reference to be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting. Juan-Simon requested that regional teams give some inputs.

Minimum requirements for each team on the ICEE Board.

It was proposed by Juan-Simon that a set of minimum requirements be determined for Teams wishing to serve on the Executive Committee.

A lively discussion ensued and no one seconded the proposal.

However it was proposed that the next Executive Committee discuss this further at the next meeting and develop this proposal further if there was a need.

Proposal to open up the venue for the Executive Committee Meeting and the Board Meeting.

It was proposed by Juan-Simon that the venue for the Executive Committee meetings and Board meetings be opened to more communities instead of alternating with hosting in the US.

Gerry & Ann explained that ICEE was governed by our bye-law that we hold the meeting every other year in the US. IET recognized the possibility of benefits to the communities that hosted a meeting but they have to recognize the cost involved that not many communities could afford.

Regional Concerns

Following a question by Jose Salazar, many regions expressed the need to “whip up enthusiasm” among the Bishops and clergy for EE so they can “fall in love” with EE. Some suggestions were:

- Send a report of this ICEE Board meeting to the Bishops Conference. An article and photo in the local Catholic paper.
- Invite the priests for their socials.
- Clergy may see EE as US program. Let them see it as International.
- Work with the seminarians to get them on board.

Greg & Linda shared that the next World Youth Day would be in Sydney in July 2008. The EE communities in Oceania will make a formal request to be listed in the program. They requested support from other regions for EE publicity and mileage.

Cesar & Gilda reported that the Dominican Republic (DR) only accepts Catholics on their weekends.

It was proposed that Gerry & Ann do a letter to the National team in DR to clarify that the purpose of CEE was to prepare couples for the sacrament of marriage but it was not exclusive to Catholics.

Jose & Barbara enquired if other communities allowed previously married couples to attend EE weekends, particularly those who will not be able to be married in Church.

From the discussion it was learnt that different regions have different approaches and it left to the regions Bishop’s Conference to decide.

Juan Simon & Patricia enquired if all presenting couples were catholic-catholic?

Most presenting couples are RC-RC. The present policy is that the presenting couple could be RC-CHR if the CHR also believes in the indissolubility of marriage and also in NFP and other tenets of the Catholic faith.

Approved Assistance

IET reported that they turned down a request for USD \$2,700 to fund a regional conference. IET acknowledged the benefits of holding a regional conference however good stewardship requires that they send the following sums to these regions for assistance:

- St Lucia USD1,200
- Cuba USD 1,000
- Argentina USD 750

Dinner with US Board.

DAY 5

Prayer Service led by Gerry & Ann

Overview of Team duties

The Teams on the ExCo presented an overview of their duties just before the Discernment.

International Executive Team (IET)

- Principally PR – where appropriate we handle issues between Ministries, ie ME/EE/RTV and Family Life groups.
- Authorize the use of the funds.
- Fund-raising.
- Chair the meetings.

Finance & Secretariat Team

- Keeping accounts.
- Disbursement according to IET's approval.
- Keeping minutes of meetings.

Outline & Weekend Resources Team

- Maintain updates to the Outline.
- Ensure that communities are using the updated Outline.
- Maintain and disseminate information on training material and resources. (from US and other communities.)

Statistics Team

- Compile statistics of weekends and present the annual figures.
- Maintain the e-group in Yahoo.com.
- Send out the reminder for the Friday prayer for weekends, and the list of weekends being conducted world-wide.
- Still compiling history of communities and regions (and if possible, the history of the diocese.)

Discernment

Facilitated by Gerry & Ann

Opening Prayer followed by reading from Isaiah 41:9 – 10 (You who I have called).

There was then a poll, the following expressed willingness to serve -:

- Ronald Ursula & Fr Rohan (South Africa)
- Cesar Gilda & Fr Raphael (Dominican Republic)
- Steve & Claudia (USA)
- Frank & Annette (Canada)
- Peter & Paulette (Canada)
- Francis & Annette (English Speaking Caribbean)

Willingness was also indicated by Memo and Lube from Mexico who were not present.

Gerry gave a report on their service to Engaged Encounter.

Reading from 1st Cor. 12: 4 – 11

Results

Steve & Claudia - 12
Francis & Annette & Fr. Leonard – 12
Cesar & Gilda & Fr Raphael – 11
Ronald & Ursula & Fr Rohan – 6

Other Results

Peter & Paulette - 3
Memo & Lube - 3
Frank & Annette – 1

The team met for transition and the following was decided -:

Steve & Claudia – Executive Team (2006 – 2009)
Francis & Annette – Finance Team (2007 – 2010)

Cesar & Gilda – Outline (2008 – 2011)
Ronald, Ursula & Fr Rohan – Statistics (2006 – 2009)

Mass was then celebrated with Fr Tery as the Chief Celebrant.

CONCLUSION

Dates of Committee Meetings

Niagara Falls – (Oct 1st – 5th 2007)

Kansas USA – September 30th – (October 4th 2008)

TASK LIST

Gerry & Ann	Write letter to Coordinators of Dominican Republic advising them of our position in interfaith participants
Steve & Claudia	Communities to be advised of resolution re Sexual Intimacy Talk. Outline to be sent to all communities.
Francis & Annette	Advise communities to increase contribution to US\$2.00 if possible
John & Mary Saxman	Contact Bishop Skylstadt on behalf of ICEE re: Vatican representation.
Steve & Claudia	Letter of thanks from Bishops of Cuba to be placed on website.
Cesar & Gilda	Cesar & Gilda to provide letter
Steve & Claudia	Recognition from Vatican
Steve & Claudia	Develop quarterly or half yearly Newsletter and send to Bishops & Priests
Steve & Claudia/ Greg & Linda Power	World Youth day to promote CEE
PACO & Mali	Translate Friday prayer into Spanish
Steve & Claudia/Executive Committee	Prepare Terms of reference for each Team
Next Executive Committee Meeting	Committee to discuss Juan Simon's proposal for minimum requirements for Executive Committee members.