

## **Call for Papers/Proposals for the African/Black Women's Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development Research Project and Edited Volume**

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### **Introduction**

African women, including women of color and the African diaspora, are at the core of Christian spiritual formation and leadership development. These women actively sustain their churches, leading congregational life and ministry through dedicated groups that deeply influence family and children's faith formation. As key agents of renewal and flourishing in their communities, African women drive church vitality across Africa, the diaspora, and the Caribbean. Without their extensive involvement, most of these churches would lack the vibrancy and resilience they currently exhibit. Their contributions are integral not only within church walls but also in broader community and social life. These women engage deeply in the care economy, provide financial support, and participate in missionary efforts, all of which nurture African spirituality and sustain Christian communities. However, despite their substantial contributions and the strength of their spirituality, they remain almost invisible in academic literature. Empirical research has also overlooked their roles, unique forms of spiritual formation, and leadership.

At the same time and despite their significant contributions to African Christianity, not much is known about the spiritual formation of African, Black, and other women of color. Similarly, the diverse gifts they bring, the spiritual vitality, passion, social and spiritual capital, and commitment to community-building are also largely underexplored. Moreover, how they navigate spiritual and theological leadership and their formation journeys within theological institutions, churches, and society also remains unclear. Given their crucial role in the growth and vitality of African Christianity, this lack of scholarly attention to women's spiritual formation is a significant gap. This research aims to address this gap by exploring the spiritual formation of African and Black women from global, multidisciplinary, and culturally decentered perspectives and employs a wide range of methodologies and theoretical perspectives.

## **Aims of the Project**

This project has three aims: First, it seeks to explore the multifaceted dimensions of spiritual formation and leadership development among African women broadly conceptualized, emphasizing inclusivity, particularly for women and children with disabilities and other categories. Secondly, it seeks to understand how these women experience and shape spirituality in ways that foster human flourishing and community resilience. Thirdly and more importantly, sheds light on African women's spirituality and leadership, illuminating their impact and honoring their foundational contributions to African Christianity. This initiative therefore seeks to explore the multifaceted dimensions of spiritual formation and leadership development among African women, with a particular emphasis on inclusivity, especially concerning women and children with disabilities and other minority groups including trans-women.

To advance this work, we invite researchers, practitioners, theologians, and social justice advocates to reflect on African/Black female spirituality and how they make sense of and experience spirituality in their churches, communities, institutions, and family life. We seek to do this through **research** and **writing**. There will be some resources available for translation and small but limited travel grants to at least one regional or international conference.

## **Call for Abstracts/Papers**

The project envisions a broader perspective on women and gender, delving deeply into the unique experiences that shape African and Black women's spirituality and leadership development. Contributions may address themes from a range of disciplines, including theology, social sciences, gender studies, feminist studies, sexuality studies, history, religious studies, psychology, philosophy, and disability studies among many others. Papers may also address some of these questions: How do African and Black women understand and experience spiritual formation in their theological institutions, churches, and society? How do Black/African women and other categories of women think, make sense, and experience spiritual formation? How do they navigate their spiritual formation in a contested social, cultural, and religious milieu? How do minority women including single women/single mothers, trans-women, and other sexual minorities make sense of their spirituality? How about women living with physical and mental disabilities? How do neurodivergent women or those working with neurodivergent children and young and emerging adults experience spiritual formation? How about Christian women from Pentecostal, charismatic, and African-instituted churches who claim agency by spiritually forming themselves? What are some of the tensions experienced by African and Black women in their spiritual lives and journeys?

We welcome scholarly papers, contextual case studies, narratives, surveys, theoretical, comparative, and multidisciplinary studies, analyses, and artistic expressions that address the following themes:

- The role of spiritual practices in fostering leadership qualities among African women.

- Intersectionality and the experiences of women and children with disabilities in spiritual and leadership contexts.
- Community-based initiatives that support the spiritual formation and leadership development of women and children with disabilities.
- Best practices and models for inclusive spiritual formation programs that empower marginalized voices.
- Women's spiritual formation of Catholic Women who work in non-Christian spaces.
- Women in Theological Education, church leadership and academia
- Women church founders who form themselves by establishing church ministries.
- Women in Mainline, African Instituted churches, Pentecostal, and charismatic churches

**Submission Guidelines:** Please submit an abstract (three hundred words) by **January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025**, to Damaris Parsitau: [Damaris.parsitau@calvin.edu](mailto:Damaris.parsitau@calvin.edu)

Selected contributors will be invited to present their work at the AASR conference scheduled to take place in July **2026** in **Botswana** and may have the opportunity for publication in a special issue and an edited book. Women in **Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking)** and **Francophone (French-speaking Africa)** are also encouraged to apply. We look forward to your contributions to this important dialogue and the advancement of spiritual formation and leadership development for African/Black women in broader perspectives including those collaborating with women and children with special needs.