The 10th anniversary of the Presbyterian Women’s Centre (PWC) in Abokobi in 2002 culminated in a week-long celebration from Monday October 28th to Sunday November 3rd. The festivities reflected the vital role of women for the Presbyterian Church (PCG), the women’s solidarity and fellowship with one another – and the tangible results these had achieved in the shape of the Centre.

To mark the occasion, songs had been written, a brochure had been printed, and a T-shirt and cloth, along with some other items, had been designed. The T-shirt and cloth had been publicly launched in July 2002, which left time to create dresses from this material for the actual celebrations. In Ghana, wearing the same cloth is a sign of solidarity, friendship, sisterhood. During the whole week of the anniversary the bright blue of the anniversary cloth was omnipresent, an impressive visual display of the mass of Presbyterian women. It was worn by members of women’s fellowships, but also by other women demonstrating their solidarity. But some men as well showed their support by either wearing a shirt made from the anniversary cloth or by donning it in the toga-like traditional way.

On the Saturday a durbar on the Centre’s premises demonstrated the PWC’s role and that of the women with regard to a broader public. Women’s fellowships came from all over Ghana, and throughout the morning dozens of smaller and larger vehicles arrived, filled with women clad in anniversary cloth, singing, clapping and ringing hand-bells, and enthusiastically greeted by those already present. Visitors from overseas, high ranking officials from the PCG and other denominations and from modern and traditional states graced the occasion. The Centre’s kitchen had been busy for days preparing tasty refreshments for the invited guests. Local cateresses provided a snack or meal for anybody who felt hungry. Beads – markers of Ghanaian womanhood – were on offer, as was cloth. On the Sunday,
a well-attended thanksgiving service in the Abokobi Zimmermann Memorial Presbyterian Church closed the celebrations.

The diversity of visitors reflected the way the facilities of the Women’s Centre are used not only by women, but also, for instance, by men’s fellowships, and not only by groups from the PCG, but also from other churches or NGOs. It reminded people of the fact that the PWC had been created by the co-operation of various actors, the list of donors who had supported the building of this Centre ranging from a PCG congregation in New York to a church youth group from a small South-German town. But first and foremost had been the women of the PCG, organised in their long-standing Presbyterian Womens’ Fellowship local meetings, who had ceaselessly collected funds to build the centre.

The various good-will messages in the anniversary brochure create an image of the Centre as a women’s project and achievement. They lauded it for its serenity, its neatness, cleanliness, efficiency and in general its hospitable air. It was acknowledged as both a recourse and a resource to meet the challenges of everyday life. A catechist’s wife, Mrs. Agnes Brobbey, praised the Centre in her message of greeting for teaching marketable skills and basic information for running a small business, thus enabling her to find relief from financial problems. A pastor’s wife, Lucy Frimpong Manso, mentioned how the prayer and fasting retreats had helped her to pray. According to her husband, another catechist’s wife, Mrs. Agnes Osei-Lawson, could now preach well, not least also because of the Centre. Such messages evoke a jumble of images related to Ghanaian women – of the financial challenges many face to live up to their customary role as nourishers, but also of the esteem female business acumen enjoys, of the omnipresence of religion, of the prestige accorded to the faculty of speaking well in public. As a central figure the director of the Women’s Centre during its first ten years, Rev. Rose Akua Ampofo, was mentioned often in those messages of greeting. ‘Mother’ and ‘motherly’ were words frequently used to describe her, attributing to her what is most esteemed in a woman in Ghana. In her case, however, motherhood was social and not biological (as is also the case with one or two other PCG women pastors).

The group of overseas guests stood for the many ways in which the PCG in general and the Women’s Centre in particular is linked to the world outside Ghana. For instance, Ms. Evelien van Beek from the Uniting Reformed Church of the Netherlands was present as a former