

Let the Earth Hear His Voice

'Every institution has an aim, the government - a wholesome society; the army - peace between nations; business - profit; the Church - the Great Commission. The Church exists for mission.'

With this statement the Anglican Church of Tanzania opened its Mission and Evangelism Consultation in Mtumba Women's Training Centre in Dodoma. The Consultation was held as part of a review of the various departments of the work of the province. Under the theme of 'Let the earth hear his voice' three representatives from each diocese including the bishop and mission and evangelism co-ordinator were invited to attend this two day Consultation.

Facilitated by Bishop Simon Chiwanga, the participants of the nineteen dioceses of the province gave an overview of the mission and evangelism work of their dioceses. These reports revealed where the church was growing, the challenges and opposition, the various issues, like HIV-AIDS that are facing the Church today. While there was rejoicing in the numerical growth of the Church the need of Christian nurture, pastoral care and discipleship was strongly expressed. The need for training of new clergy and the empowerment of the laity to meet these needs were discussed with real concern. The departure of some of the youth to the new independent churches in Tanzania and the difficulties in some areas of strong Islamic influence were among other challenges facing the church. Other areas were experiencing good relationships with people of other faiths and so through the sharing of stories, strategies and mission models each encouraged the other.

As strong emphasis was placed of the holistic approach to mission and evangelism. The Church needs to be visible in society in reaching out to the whole person, spiritually, emotionally, physically and intellectually. To be seen and known in meeting needs around them will strengthen voicing of the gospel message of hope. The importance of partnership with the Church world wide and relating to each other, contributing from their context gave a sense of perspective of being part of the Anglican Communion and God's purpose for his world.

In looking at the future strategy for mission and evangelism in the Province it became evident to all that there is a need for a Provincial Mission and Evangelism Co-ordinator. This recommendation, along with others is included in the report to the Province. Near the end of the consultation a participant said to me, 'Sharing our stories and experiences together renews our vision, energises and encourages us to go back to our dioceses with new hope and expectation.'