



IAFN

September 2016



A Youthful Church

Good news stories from around the Anglican Communion

International Anglican Family Network

celebrating the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation

A Youthful Church

Editorial

Mathilde Nkwirikiye, Anglican Church of Burundi

Jesus rebukes his disciples who, for reasons unrevealed to us, thought that children's place was not to be near Jesus where the action was - the centre of attention. Was there fear that children might compete with adults for the front stage? The Lord's response was 'Do not hinder them for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these'.

Jesus seems to suggest that, contrary to common wisdom of his time and the view of his disciples, children have a special place in the Kingdom of God. As such, children should have a special place in our Church.

In Burundi, Sunday schools often host hundreds of children from different backgrounds. Sunday schools are the most vibrant parts of our churches. Some of the children, especially in rural areas, travel several miles, cross several rivers, to participate in Sunday worship. These children learn the word of God together, pray and sing together and experience God's love together. They come to share one common older brother, Jesus, who calls them to share his Heavenly Father. They learn to receive God's love who accepts them as they are in their diversity and vulnerability.

In a country where national unity remains a major challenge, these children provide an inspiration for the rest of us, both inside and outside the Church, for challenging deep-rooted divisions.

A story is told of a village chief who calls his most trusted servant and tells him to accompany his son to visit his aunt who lived in another village. The chief told the servant that if anything happened to the son, he would pay for it with his life. Halfway through the journey, the chief's son insisted they stopped and played. This displeased the servant who wanted to ensure that the chief's son arrived safely and quickly to the destination. However, the chief's son insisted and argued that if they did not stop and play, he would cry until something terrible happened to him.

This story is a call on church members and church leaders to stop in their busy, urgent and important church programmes and take time to play, lest something terrible happens to the children entrusted to us by our King. In the rest of the world, as in Burundi, children are the greatest gift God gives to individuals, families and communities. They are a gift of life. Children represent a hope for the future. If we fail to recognise this, in addition to being guilty of disobeying God's command, we might be jeopardising the vitality of our Church today and tomorrow.

Jesus 'took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them'. As a church, we are called to bless children. As he takes the children in his arms, Jesus is able to understand how to bless these children. Jesus' blessing speaks directly into these children's physiological, emotional, social and spiritual needs. As a church, we are called to humble ourselves enough to listen and hear the needs of children, both the very young and the adolescent, in order to understand how to bless them.

As the stories in this newsletter testify, a church for children is one that is humble and loving enough to be inspired by children and close enough to pray for them and bless them.

International Anglican Family Network (IAFN)

IAFN networks across the Anglican Communion to celebrate the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation. Out of this celebration IAFN is an advocate for the family in the face of behaviours which diminish this potential, sharing stories of hope, promoting family care and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity.

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Front cover: Young singers at the 16th session of the Anglican Consultative Council, Lusaka, Zambia, April 2016. Photo ©Anglican Communion Office.

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Taking the Church Bus to school

Clifton D Nedd

In 2003, the northernmost parish of St Patrick, Grenada, in the Diocese of the Windward Islands, undertook a strategic audit of the parish. This highlighted problems of children's late arrival and frequent absences from school because many had to travel long distances.

The privately-owned public transport system was inadequate. Many operators accepted only a limited number of children on each trip because they paid a reduced fare. The result: many children missed school for not having the fare, or arrived late waiting for a bus willing to take them.

In response, the church undertook to provide a school-bus service in the communities of Hermitage. Through a loan from a commercial bank, contributions from the church, and relief in taxes and duties provided by the Government, a bus was purchased. This makes at least two morning and two evening trips transporting children (not only Anglicans) to the schools in the parish.



Photo: St Patrick's Anglican school

The bus gets 60 to 90 children to school each day, attending two secondary schools (one Presbyterian, one Seventh Day Adventist), three primary schools (Anglican, Roman Catholic and Government-run) and one kindergarten.

Thirteen years on, the church has repaid its loan. This has not been easy because fees collected from the children, at half the rate on a public bus, barely meet the operating cost. Frequently, the loan repayments were late and the church risked having the bus repossessed. Fortunately, due to local fundraising efforts, charters for private tours, and generous donor contributions, the church now owns the bus outright.

The greatest beneficiaries are the children, many of whom have peace of mind knowing that they have a secure ride to school and back home, even when their parents cannot afford the fee.

No doubt, this service provided by the church will bring tremendous long-term benefits to the whole community.

The bus is now aging and in need of repairs and the parish is developing a sustainability plan so that it eventually can be replaced.

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Daniel's Den – for toddlers and community relationships

Jo Gordon, founder of Daniel's Den in London, UK, describes how toddler groups and prayer can support the development of children and transform multi-ethnic relationships.

'Is your son called Daniel?' I am often asked this question, and the simple answer is 'No'. I run a charity called Daniel's Den set up 20 years ago when my son was four months old (by the way – he's called Joshua). The name originates in the Bible where Daniel ended up in a lion's den – a scary place – because he prayed and then prayer got him out. It is often like this with having children. We pray that God will bless us with a child and then when they come, it can be scary and we need constant prayer to help us survive!

Daniel's Den is a toddler group charity based in Brent, London and our mission is to encourage and enrich family life in order to build stronger communities.

Every year we work with 250 families from over 45 nationalities providing a safe, welcoming space for children and parents/carers to learn and play together - to know and be known in the local community and to build relationships within and beyond their own cultural and ethnic group.

Many people who come to our groups may, in this country, only know their husband and their child. It is a joy to see strangers become not only friends but 'family', and in the midst of these little groups, deep bonds of trust are formed. Our work is like a small pebble causing ripples to go out into the community.

'It's not rocket science but it works', said a local vicar. Many of the toddler groups are held in churches. A simple structure of play, food and a cup of tea, with singing added, is an ideal recipe for engendering an atmosphere of community.



Welcome and fun for children and parents

Photo: Daniel's Den

Our motto is TEAM Together Everyone Achieves More and we believe everyone who comes through the doors has something to give or receive.

From helping share the fruit, tidy up, to even donating money to help build a toilet in Mozambique – our toddler group is a place where you can make a difference.

1277 days

On average, a child in the UK has 1277 days between birth and starting nursery education. For the parents and the children, it is vital time of development when strong foundations of friendship and community can be built. '1277' is a national network for toddler groups with a Christian ethos in the UK, and there are over 20,000 church-based groups in the UK.

Prayer is key, and our vision is to see a toddler group within walking distance for every family in this nation. We don't want them to be 'hidden treasure' but treasured for what they are: – a place where Christ's love can be experienced with all five senses regardless of age, background and belief.

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Youth empowerment through Umoja

Prodip Chand Mondal

In the village of Paitapukur in the Rajshahi district of Bangladesh, young people have united in self-help groups. Most of them are at school and very few go to college. They come from poor families and often have to leave school to work at an early age.

Last year, the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme (CBSDP) supported by the mission society USPG, held a workshop on the Umoja programme which encourages communities to identify and pool their own skills and resources, set up development projects and work together.



Working together for the community

Photo: CBSDP

Participants entered into the group exercise enthusiastically, identifying their resources, priority needs and strategies to address problems in their community. To them, the Bible is central, giving guidance, spirit and confidence in their work in community development that includes adapting to climate changes, standing against domestic and social violence and addressing disasters.

Umoja has brought a big change to their life and living. It has made the community more united and the church is closer to them, being more purposeful.

Self-help for teenage girls

The Paitapukur Umoja group of 14 girls has raised awareness of gender discrimination, organised an inter-faith Bengali New Year festival, planted trees in their village, and started a savings scheme to give them opportunities for living a fuller life. There are now more girls at school and more kitchen gardens in the village.

"I am fortunate in that I have not been affected by violence against women, though it is a major problem in Bangladesh. We are very aware of it... I am very happy to have received training in the Umoja programme... It has broadened my knowledge about the Bible and inspired me to do good things for the Church and the community. Our group has decided to save money to help the poor. Some of us donate ten taka each month for the needy." Ashalata, 14

"My parents encouraged me to take higher education. This is a male-dominated society but I have been trying my best to pursue my goals by continuing with my studies at college. The aim of the Umoja process is self-transformation. This concept has changed our attitudes... With the other young women, we have started a savings programme so we can save for our futures and invest in alternative sources of income for resisting poverty." Ratna, 17

CBSDP thinks Umoja is one of the best tools to use opportunities within the community and change people's lives.

Some of the information in this article came through USPG which supports the project.

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Young women in the Church, arise, shine

Hildegard Napella, pastor's wife at St Nicholas Anglican church, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, writes of her research into the needs of young women in the Church and her project to help them.

For the past few months of my research within the Church, I have discovered a huge potential of talented young women who make up almost 30 per cent of the church congregation. Most of them are jobless but many are members of our church choirs and after Sunday masses they just hang around

and do nothing. This 'woman power' has been left unexploited – hence a need to develop, empower and inspire them.

Since the common goal in most churches is basically aimed at building the Kingdom of God, we have established a group of these young women which will start with three main aims: to *discover, develop and inspire* (DDI) young church women to reach their potential.



These aims will be driven through our Vision, Mission and Goals:

Our Vision (*where we want to go*): To become good ambassadors for building the Kingdom of God through using our God-gifted talents.

Our Mission (*why we are going*): To discover, develop and inspire young and unprivileged church women reach their full potential.

Our Goals (*how we are going*): Networking, exploring talents, inspiring each other to revive old goals.

Our Motto: Isaiah 60.1 Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the Glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

We have already gathered 37 names and contact details of the women targeted for this programme, and selected five who are influential to the rest of the group so that they can become inspired and spread the message to the others.

The idea made great impact on the five women I met and we each got an opportunity to tell our life stories. Janet's story (name changed) touched all of us.

Janet's life changed when both her parents died when she was 14 years old. She had to stay with her aunt who used her as a source of income through prostitution. This life went on until she visited her mother's friend and told her what she was going through.

The friend decided to take her to church (our church) for more spiritual counselling. I thank God she was in this first group of five and she had the strength and courage to speak out about her life experience. It gives me comfort that through her we will be able to achieve a lot by inspiring other women to talk so that we gather these stories as a prelude for action.

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Safeguarding the young

Revd Richard M Rukundo

Safety and security are some of the most difficult issues for children's work and ministry in Uganda today. Ugandan children are vulnerable to a range of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual dangers and, well aware that the Church represents Christ, there are high expectations of us.

The 2015 Uganda Police Report estimated 8,956 cases of serious sexual abuse of children. Our ministries are equipping leaders in schools and affiliated organisations to become fully aware of these dangers, guard against them and educate the children to protect themselves.

With responsible teachers and leaders and by doing everything possible to prevent harm or injury to all children while they are in our care, we are building parents' confidence in the Church's ministry to young people in a country where many are unsure.

The Church of Uganda has over 5,000 parishes and over 7,500 small congregations. With 600 pre-primary, 5,118 primary and 460 secondary schools, and also numerous business, technical, vocational and training schools, including teacher training colleges, it has the structures which are vital in preventing all forms of violence and abuse against children.



Children's event in Mukono Diocese

Photo: Church of Uganda

The Church of Uganda's *Child Protection Policy* is a helpful tool providing guidance and promoting good practices for child nurturing and care.

By engaging all stakeholders inside and outside the Church, through radio talk shows, child-led campaigns, meetings and church sermons, we believe it is possible to reduce the child abuse and violence that continues to rock our country.

Our greatest challenge is financial support to implement and sustain all these initiatives.

Success Stories

We met Doreen during our Discipleship Programme for Children's Church training at Galami Church, South Rwenzori Diocese. After the sudden death of her father, there was no money for her to go back to school and she entered into an early marriage.

At 18, she had her first baby, and all her dreams of becoming a teacher ended. Now with a second child, she is not happy because this is not what she dreamt about – she does not want her kids to end up like her. Her passion to become a teacher plus her Christian background helped her to become a volunteer in the Children's Church and she prays that God makes her dreams come true one day.

Her story is that of many girls.

Merab and Doreen (names changed) are teachers at Devine Care Children's Learning Centre in Mukono Diocese. Having trained with us in the Discipleship Programme for children at risk, they teach and care for girls who have problems and have dropped out of school in a *Catch-UP Programme* with the major aim of getting them back into school. They taught a lesson of growing friendship to the girls in the care centre. Using a friendship chart, the girls had to draw lines from the centre to the names of people who love them or hurt them.

The teacher noticed one girl who had drawn one line to her uncle. When they asked her why she thought her uncle did not love her, she started crying. She shared that on one fateful day this uncle tried to rape her and she ran to her grandmother, who did not believe her and chased her away.

She was picked up by a charity organisation while on the street. This girl opened up to the teachers and later brought her sister for help. Now, they are living a better life, though they need school fees to go back and continue with school.

Rachael is a children's teacher at her church in Rwenzori Diocese. She is passionate about being a teacher with a difference – a role model. During her growing up, she so admired her Sunday school teacher that she had started imitating her, doing everything her teacher told her. But one weekend she found her best teacher had got publically drunk and had fallen. Rachael was so disappointed and said "I was discouraged to the extent of running away from church".

But, because she was from a Christian home she came back and has now taken on teaching to be a role model, who will have integrity in and out of class.

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Supporting the holistic development of children

Khin Thida Nyunt

Myanmar, one of the largest countries in mainland Southeast Asia, has a population of approximately 53 million. About 20 million are children. Myanmar signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and has several national laws committing the State to uphold children's rights.

Many children in Myanmar are under severe pressure. In families with few educational or occupational skills, children have to earn daily wages to support their family's existence and are ignorant of their daily survival needs. In well-to-do families, children are also pressured. Most parents have expectations of their children gaining high marks and distinctions on leaving school to gain entrance to a university.



Training teachers in Hpa-an diocese

Photo: Education Dept. CPM

As a result, parents constantly push their children, inevitably placing them under enormous pressure and spending a huge amount of money but forgetting the importance of their holistic development. There are moves in education towards a student-centred approach but this will take some years to become normal practice.

Church of the Province of Myanmar

The Church of the Province of Myanmar has 67,000 members of whom about 6,500 are children. The Christian Education and Music department was established in 1961 and through its teaching ministry and activities has worked for children's holistic development. In 2011, we pioneered child protection and paved the way for its wider provision. Another important area of our work is providing educational supports to needy kids and poor areas.

We aim to enhance ethical development in the community, nourish spiritual understanding in the Church and empower and reinforce children's self-esteem as they grow to adults.

To do this, we encourage educational seminars for parents on child protection, child development and child psychology. When possible, we help to educate parents in the community. We are recruiting teachers in six different dioceses and compiling resource material such as DVDs and activity books for Sunday school. Every two years we hold an 'Outstanding Summer Camp' for children chosen from each diocese.

Our Christian Education and Music department has qualified educators but it is a struggle to find funding. Children are not able to buy books and the department is not able to provide them, particularly for remote areas. We encourage individual fund-raising and self-reliance programmes but lack of funds limits the number of children who can benefit from opportunities like the Outstanding Summer Camp.

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Belonging, Believing, Becoming

The Child Friendly Church Award scheme was created by the Diocese of Liverpool in England to help parishes welcome and integrate children and their families into the worshipping life of their church. The scheme is now being used by an increasing number of dioceses. St Nicholas Church Blundellsands received the Award nearly two years ago, Canon Janet Roberts describes their experience:

The Child Friendly Church Award scheme provided us with advice on developing our children's ministry and helped us to focus on what we needed to do to provide a safe and welcoming environment. We are in the happy position of growing in the area of children and young families.

The church offers a home to four toddler groups, an after-school club, a Christian club for 8 to 11-year-olds, uniformed groups, two youth groups, baby ballet, language classes and a music workshop. We have Sunday school, a monthly Family Worship service, monthly cafe-style worship and a thriving Toddler church congregation of about 70 children and 100 adults.

I believe our main reasons for success are that God is at work in our community and a welcoming and tolerant attitude from all members of the congregation. We are delighted to be a truly all-age congregation.

Like many churches we struggle for money, resources and leaders, and these initiatives have taken several years to develop. We have a beautiful historic building but it is constantly in need of repair. All our groups run on a shoestring and we are constantly in need of new leaders as people's circumstances change.

We never know how many will turn up in a given week but we rejoice in the life and enthusiasm children bring to our church family. Our strap line is *Belonging, Believing, Becoming*. We aim to be a place where everyone feels they can belong.

It may be noisy and chaotic at times but we seem to be doing some things right as testified by Max. Aged 11 at his confirmation service, Max spoke these words to the whole congregation:

"I have grown up in a Christian household and have always been in and around church. God has always played a big part in my life. It was only as I have grown older that I have started to question what it is all about.

"I am very interested in Religious Education at school and between this and church, this has given me a good basis from which to ask questions about the Bible... I listen to what the Bible tells me and consider it. I then think about it and ask questions so that I gain a deeper understanding. Sometimes questions still remain but generally I am satisfied with the answers, all of which helps to increase my faith and share it with others.



Young confirmation candidates

Photo: Carl Rooney/Janet Roberts

"I am proud to be a practising Christian and will continue to be one. I would like to think that I chose God – but I sometimes think it was the other way round. At the end of the day it doesn't really matter – I'm here with God and that's what really counts. I love him and he loves me."

For the Child Friendly Church award scheme see <http://www.liverpool.anglican.org/cfca>

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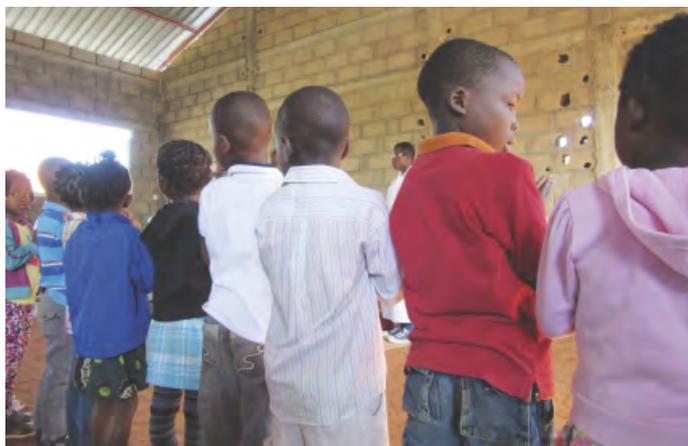
Children: the church of today and tomorrow

Lurdes Ibraimo Macie, Sunday School Coordinator

Children represent one third of church members in the Diocese of Lebombo. They meet every Sunday after the Blessing of children, before the Communion, to listen to the good news and the explanation of it at their level of understanding. This is followed by practical activities prepared by the teachers.

The last Diocesan Synod approved the creation of a Sunday school coordination team to represent the children's ministry in all meetings with other church group leaders, and for the first time the children's ministry has a chaplain.

The elected team, working through an improved coordination structure at archdeaconry and parish level, aims to strengthen children's faith by designing an appropriate curriculum, translating Sunday school material and recruiting and training more teachers.



The daily readings, especially the Gospel, are the focus of the children's lessons with the aim that they talk about what they have learnt with their parents when they go home after the service. Each lesson is followed by a song or practical activity.

Aware of important events in the country and the world, the diocesan children's ministry annual plan takes into account the international and national days and in the Sunday after each event children have a special activity to celebrate the day.

June is the 'child month' because of International Child Day, followed by the Environment Day and ending with the African Child day on the 16th. In this month, the Diocese focuses attention on the children, and each parish, congregation or archdeaconry prepares them for multiple activities such as planting trees and doing the gardening. Children participate in the service with readings, preaching, singing and acting as church council members.

It is a way of saying 'we are the Church of today and tomorrow, let us learn so that we can do better tomorrow.'

Children need a place in the Church where they can express and live the love of God, practising what is good in the eyes of God.

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Youth Theology Camp

Rebecca Wong

Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (HKSKH) has three dioceses and one missionary area. Over the years, HKSKH Province has been adopting different strategies to engage and nurture young people.

It was decided the dioceses would join together to hold a joint 'Youth Theology Camp' to strengthen the faith and growth of young church members.

Youth Theology Camp, launched in 1998, has been further developed by linking with SKH Ming Hua Theological College. During the seven-day camp, young people study, play, worship and pray together.

They share and discuss specific topics, building and consolidating Anglican identity and putting their faith into action, witnessing to the Lord.

Theological learning with biblical teaching and activities

The participants attend Theological College to experience theological education through seminars, reading, presentation and worship. They review books and literature in the library and enjoy the student life. They also visit St John's Cathedral built in 1849, the first Anglican Church in Hong Kong.

A highlight of the camp is the 'Dialogue with clergy and bishops'. At the Provincial Clergy Meeting, the clergy show their great support for the young visitors and encourage them to listen to the calling of God. The participants also have an interview with the Archbishop, the Most Revd Dr Paul Kwong.

Young church members may only read his words in the provincial newspaper but now they have a chance to dialogue with the Archbishop. This gives them more understanding of the situation and challenges and enhances their bond with the Church.



Young people concentrating on theology

Photo: Echo

Spiritual reflection

Through prayers, chanting, services, individual retreats and mindful walking, the participants can slow down their pace, be more aware of their own psychological condition and able to listen to the voice of God.

Participation in social ministry

The young people undertake fieldwork at the social service units operated by the HSKSH Welfare Council so as to imitate Christ's service for the weak. They work at the homes for elderly and mentally-disabled. This fieldwork may not be easy but participants treasure the experience of serving, putting their faith into action and discharging their pastoral responsibility.

Dennis Fung and Hazel Hui joined Youth Theology camp in 2015. Dennis said, "Young people in Hong Kong are often labelled as being critical and ego-centric." Throughout the Theology Camp, he reminded himself that it is important to consider the needs and views of others while dealing with issues and problems. By constantly engaging in self-reflection, remembering to listen to each other humbly, and embracing differences, they all could live in the spirit of Anglicanism, "Though we are many, we are one body".

Biblical teaching impressed Hazel a lot. After the camp, she decided to strengthen her links with God and put her faith into action. Our faith is down-to-earth and practical. Hazel made up her mind to serve the needy in the community and spread the love of God.

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Chapel ministry sees vibrant return of young people

Maydene Campbell

When a young adult from the Chapel Anglican Community at the University of West Indies at Mona (UWIMONA) in Jamaica, led by Fr Garth Minott and family, invited me to an Anglican Young Adult Movement (AYAM) meeting three years ago, little did I know I was about to discover the most vibrant, exciting and rewarding path the Anglican Church could embrace - to welcome our young people back to church and, in essence, back to life!



Photo: UWI Anglican Community

The young adult population of our church, like most other Anglican churches, had been dwindling and was in veritable need of an injection of faith, energy and youth. Youth tends to respond to honesty, pureness of heart and above all, respect.

Guided by these tenets, the UWIMONA Chapel's Young Adult President, Maydene Campbell, embarked upon the task, along with every member of the church, to win young souls for Christ.

The UWIMONA Chapel Anglican Community on the campus of the University, which provides a wealth of culture, has the distinction of being a very warm and welcoming home for students from Jamaica and the Caribbean. As a result, its congregation is well versed in making a place for new faces.

In establishing our own UWIMONA AYAM Chapter, we have launched a springboard for consistent 'fellowshipping' of our young adults with a view to engaging greater numbers and enabling the committed to play greater roles in the movement of the church.

To date, 58 young adults participate in praise and worship every day in the UWIMONA AYAM WhatsApp* Group. Moreover, since 2014, our young adults have been ministering to the church through preaching, dancing, singing and testifying in their Third Sunday Young Adult Services. Recently, this has given way to another AYAM group, the Hospitality Committee, establishing themselves with a tripartite mission, foremost of which is to feed the church. This has seen the young adults involved in:

- *Feeding:* Providing sandwiches, drinks, tea, dessert for the congregation every third Sunday of the month
- *Funding:* Finding ways to assist fellow young adults in meeting expenses, where possible, and
- *Following up* with their fellow young congregation members, if they have not been there for three concurrent Sundays.

The Young Adults of the UWIMONA Chapel are constantly utilizing even more enterprising, fresh and new ways to make the gospel come alive and bring meaning to even the youngest members of the congregation.

Their 2016 plans include a flash mob for summer; an annual movie night out; Fishers for Christ, a young adult mega meeting; and an annual Christmas Party.

The UWIMONA Chapel is indeed happy for the vibrant return of its young adults and the meaningful contribution to worship that each of them has offered to date. Is this not then, a youthful church?

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* WhatsApp is an instant messaging application for mobile phones.

Learning from young people

Revd Tatiana Ribeiro, National Youth Coordinator for the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil (IEAB), writes about the priority given to youth ministry in her Province.

Following a General Synod in 2013, Youth Ministry has been a priority in the life of IEAB, and the national church has taken up this responsibility with love, care and commitment. The Archbishop appointed a Working Group composed of young people and clergy from different dioceses to oversee the strengthening of this ministry with young people and to cover the cultural and geographic diversity of Brazil and IEAB.

This has been a journey walked together with the young, listening to and sharing their desires and aspirations. The Church needs to use a language that they understand and must reach out to show how important they are and that they have a place in our communities. Young people seek a community where they can share their spirituality and faith but do not want to be just observers. They want to take part – participating in decision-making bodies, helping with activities, participating in the liturgy.



National Youth Meeting

Photo: IEAB

“Going to church is more than attending the services, it is to live out, to be the Church. It is to sustain and be sustained. To live out the church is not just about getting along with it, it is about exploring what it has to offer within and without it, as the word of God is not only what is written in the Bible, but also what is in our actions.” *Debora*

We need to be a church where young people recognise one another, find a safe place to share their anxieties and insecurities, and are respected and accepted as they are. We have a new generation which is thirsty for hearing words of love and acceptance from the Church, not words of reproach and oppression but words of justice and respect of diversity. However, our young people do not want only words, they want action and witness, and they are willing to take up this mission.

At a National Youth meeting in 2015, we enjoyed days of fraternal living together, with Bible studies and workshops

with topics relevant to young people’s lives. One of the results of that meeting was a letter, written by the young people themselves, which ends by saying:

“We are young people with a calling, we want to be equipped and we are not the future of the Church, but the present.”

We need to turn our eyes, ears and hearts to welcome this generation which wants to be today’s church.

In response to their request, we are organizing an online course for training young people. This will cover prayer, service (diakonia) and mission, presented in two online modules, and there will be an exchange of diocesan placements for mission. We believe that soon we will have young people empowering other young people, talking to them in their communities.

“The Church is very important in my life because I see it as a church which really seeks to love the neighbour without judging. I have learnt to see those who are different with eyes of love and empathy. The Church is one of the sources which influences me to seek and fight for justice and equal rights, which I believe is a mission because we can spread the love of God in different ways and with different attitudes.” *Diana*

Let us allow our youth to take up and live their vocation in our communities. If they think and organise themselves differently, that does not mean they do not know how to do things. So, let us challenge our communities to open their hearts and minds to welcome the youth, providing support, care and love. Let us trust our young people and challenge them to take up challenges in the community.

Translated by Revd Joabe G Cavalcanti

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Youth finding their sound

Raheel Sharoon, development officer at the Diocese of Raiwind, Church of Pakistan, tells how music gave new life to their youth work.

In 2011, our diocese decided to reassess its youth work and to use church music to inspire and encourage young people. Churches in Pakistan are generally full since they also serve as community centres. But we felt that our young people were not taking part in singing with the same fervour and enthusiasm as the older generation. So the concept of the Youth Gospel Concert Group was born.

Initially, we invited amateur musicians and singers who were already part of church choirs to form a group, where we reproduced the church music with modern western instruments - in our words, making it more ‘youthy’. In Pakistan, our approach was unique as our band was not just based on young people from our diocese or that of the Church of Pakistan, but also had members who were Roman Catholics, Salvationists, Pentecostals and Presbyterians. It took us some time to find our sound, but we did it!

With mixed hopes and fear, we organized our first concert - hope because it was very close to our heart and fear because we were not sure how more conservative people would receive it. The concert began with around 250 people in the audience. For the next 90 minutes we all sang and praised the Lord together; it was a surreal experience for everyone.

Since then, we have done many concerts. The biggest audience we had was around 1,100 young people and the Moderator of the Church of Pakistan said that it was the largest gathering of Christian young people he has seen in Pakistan.



Youth Gospel Concert

Photo: Mr. Zeeshan Anwer

Our band continues to evolve as we don't have permanent members. We didn't want to make a 'band' because we envisioned this to become a movement. We wanted young people to listen to our music and then go to their church and make the worship more energetic and interesting.

In 2013, we focused on two groups, firstly the young people who were away from church and secondly the young who were drug addicts.

Some of our musicians were drug addicts and were shunned by their church. We invited them for jam sessions and never really asked them to stop using drugs; but worship is such a powerful tool that it transforms life; now all of them are clean and a testament of God's glory through music.

Churches now invite our group to take part in Sunday services; we also work with Church choirs. Apart from practising the music together, we also meet once a month to have an interactive Bible Study in which a member from the group prepares a reflection which we then discuss.

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'I am a Green Anglican'

When Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch". Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." Mark 5.4

Ncumisa Ukeveva Magadla is one of the many young people in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa who have found lively expression of their Christian faith through their church's engagement with climate and environmental justice. She writes:

Care for creation is probably one of the most overlooked ministries in our spiritual journey, especially by young people, because it bears no immediate results, requires perseverance, passion and obviously does not draw crowds. From a distance, you can then conclude it's not attractive.

Although I was not really conscious of my concern for the environment, I believe that deep inside me, it has always been there. My early childhood years were spent in a wonderful rural environment with a real forest just outside our front door.

Since then I have been a young green Anglican and it has been a gradual journey with new knowledge and experiences adding to my commitment to care for creation. Growing up in a very spiritual household taught me so much about being faithful to your cause, and that's what keeps me grounded and passionate.

I may understand environmental pressing factors but it is not just me who can turn the wheel around. We have an amazing base of people in our pews who would love to take action but who have no proficiency in environmental management. With the experience I have collected, I am able to assist young people in developing a vision to serve and renew the earth in their own small corners.

I do believe that young people in the Anglican Church have the ability and the capacity to change the world. At the moment many are deeply buried in a material world. They are not aware of the consequences of their purchases. For example they do not connect buying cheap clothing from Asia with someone working for a slave wage.

By reaching out to young people through their social media platforms, it is possible to grow awareness. It is also important for those of us who are environmentally aware to set responsible examples. It can be fun. For example, in a neighbourhood where four of us go to the same church,



Ncumisa and Green Anglicans

we could car-share. It not only reduces our carbon footprint but it is an opportunity to activate a sense of community and to make new friends.

Care for creation requires thorough understanding and faith and I believe in positive thinking. I can never overcome this on my own; the Anglican Communion needs to join hands and, like good stewards, mind God's commandment to work and take care of the land. The thought of an environmentally peaceful society is the drive behind my effort. I wait for the day when all will be equally loved and protected.

Being a Green Anglican means dealing with reality, our future; it takes courage, but I believe in change, effort, as well as love for our precious planet. So now it's all about advocating and acting on climate change and other environmental issues.

Those of us who can see the light, need to go into the deep waters and fish for more earth keepers. Jesus gave us the will.

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What about children who are not in church?

Maranda St John Nicolle

For Katy Thompson, who runs The *Doorsteps Project* in Oxford, UK, working to help create a church for young people in her own neighbourhood is an exciting challenge. The church population in the UK is increasingly older, but Katy is clear: "It is obviously a biblical mandate that all people would know of God's love and that young people would know that God is on their side. The Gospel is for all people."

The challenge to churches is to "turn the focus of your church outwards and towards young people".

Oxford diocese offers *child and youth-friendly church awards*, but what about the children who are not in church? As Katy asks, if we can't be a "sign of the Kingdom in the community... what integrity do we have?"

The *Doorsteps Project* wants to help churches engage with children in the community. Run by Viva, a Christian organisation working with children at risk, it was started partly in response to a horrific case of grooming and trafficking of young girls which took place in Oxford.

Following research, Viva found that children's most significant needs arise from "unstable family life and struggling parents, low self-esteem, lack of vision and aspiration for life, difficulty of entering employment and household poverty."

Viva then surveyed local churches to see what they were already doing with children and found that while churches recognised the key needs, the activities they were running did not address them. However, more than 75 per cent said they wanted to respond and to do so in collaboration with others. So *Doorsteps* is creating partnerships that enable churches to engage effectively with young people.

The first of the partnerships, a youth aspiration project called 'Find your fire', involves a local Anglican church, a variety of agencies and the local council. 'Find your fire' pairs young participants – aged 14 to 19 – with one or two adult mentors; offers them qualifications; brings them together fortnightly to learn from each other; and asks them to design peer-education projects.

The collaboration is energising individuals within churches as well as whole church communities. And Katy sees it as having the potential to address what research shows is the challenge in many churches across the Anglican Communion.

"Low self-esteem and lack of vision/aspiration for life are [issues] across the board ... In our post-modern age ... much more relative values, peer pressure and celebrity culture are ravaging the world view of our young people, and so there's a massive need to support families and to support young people as they seek to find their way in the world, what their purpose is, and even to realise that they are beloved."

The key, Katy feels, is not just to ask what young people are doing, but why, and to bring Good News to bear on the underlying issues.

"Young people need to know they belong; they have a purpose on this earth ... If in this generation, churches can communicate 'you belong and you are beloved' everything else will flow."

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Loving God

We thank you for the gift of children created in your own image.

Help us to nurture each child's potential and protect them from any form of harm

so they may develop into the person you mean them to be;

to discover in you a love that will never leave them.

Receive our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord who gave us the perfect example of unconditional love and who respected and loved all children.

Elizabeth Penlington in *Respecting Children: Resources for Worship*, The Churches' Network for Non-violence



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