

## FATHERS AND FAMILIES



Men with their children watching an aerobatic show, Nairobi, Kenya.

Photo: Betty Piese/Panos Pictures.

## EDITORIAL

Part of the challenge – and hopefully the strength – of the Family Network newsletters is the combining of views from different cultures. In this issue on **Fathers and Families**, there is a marked difference between the patriarchal societies where the position of the man as head of the family is “non negotiable”, and many Western societies. In this newsletter we have interspersed information from the different countries to help draw out the contrasts. Articles from Africa and India cite Biblical texts to underline the male head-ship of the family. They go on to reveal both the strengths and the weaknesses of such head-ship: when abused it can make the lives of women and children inescapably miserable. In the West, such views of male predominance are questioned in many Christian families, and other Biblical texts cited to stress the importance of partnership in marriage and the more equal role of women.

Throughout the Anglican Communion there is evidence of the dislocation of rapid change, often in part brought about Easter 2000.

by economic forces which undermine the role of men for example as “breadwinner” of the family. As Bishop Richard Holloway, President of the Family Network, pointed out when speaking at a conference entitled *Father Matters* in Scotland, it is hard to be a father in a society that seems to have discarded the primacy of the male role. “Fathering is in crisis among the poor today, because the roles which largely gave working men their pride have been removed and maleness itself now seems to be socially problematic.”

Many of the articles in the newsletter tell of the difficulties of fathers, particularly the young men who have had little education or job opportunities. At the same time, research from many countries is showing how important fathers are in the upbringing and nurture of children. In Africa, India, UK, Australia and USA there are efforts being made to strengthen the position of fathers by support groups, help in finding employment which will make it possible for them to provide – or help provide – for their families. Poverty is again a key component of the difficulties – many young dads are not “deadbeat” but “dead-broke”. Irresponsibility is also a

problem and many articles call for more education and a deeper understanding of Christian teaching about parenthood. This newsletter underlines – across all cultures – the importance of fathers being responsible parents. A study by the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at Edinburgh University reported on the theme of **What Do Children Need from their Fathers?** Many, both parents and children, responded to this question with the reply that fathers needed to “be there”. As the article from Canada points out, “being there” can mean different things, but it certainly implies support and concern. The research also made clear the importance of the relationship between the parents. Support services are needed for both. There are many reasons why parenting is best as a shared partnership. The most important reasons are the children.

“The effect is so overwhelming you do feel it is magic. Fathers only have to do a little to get so much in return. What do we have to do to free up fathers to do that little thing which turns their sons’ lives round?” Adrienne Katz, speaking at *Father Matters* Conference, Scotland, November 1999.

## AUSTRALIA



Father and son.

### A story of Fatherhood

Single fatherhood was a surprise, even though I had been expecting it. My seven-year-old son, Zac, came to live with me in 1995 after a three-year absence. My expectations were fuelled by the rise in literature dealing with “men’s issues”. Single fatherhood was going to be one long, ecstatic and meaningful experience. Instead, it was, well, ordinary. Life was school lunches and homework and washing and parent-teacher interviews and soccer practice. There was no moment of deep male communion in the woods over the deer he had felled with his first hunting rifle! Life was hard, beautiful, exhausting, frustrating and joyous in that deceptively ordinary way.

Single fatherhood surprised me because of the loneliness I encountered, both in myself and in my son. I stepped away from a professional career into the abyss of the welfare recipient. Loneliness and alienation are bound to visit those who flout society’s expectations. The school community was suspicious of me. I was a male in the primary school playground. Fathers were present but only as supporting actors. This was “women’s business” and I continually felt like an interloper. As an unmarried man, I was perceived as deviant or dangerous and subtly excluded from the conversations and coffee mornings that were the backbone of their support structures. My male friends tried to help, but they were engaged in the “real world” of paid work, so their empathy was often hamstrung by a lack of common experience. Most helpful of all was the support from my Church community at St Mary Magdalene’s. They enfolded me,

prayed with me and encouraged me as I attempted to love a wild-child.

I was surprised to find God there. In my immaturity, I expected to find God only on great spiritual quests. God speaks through the gentle breeze as well as the roaring tumult. God can be a God of small things that visits frail people like single fathers. The extraordinary ordinariness of loving my son was a point of contact with Grace. It was the experience of the Cross, with pain sitting a heartbeat away from new life and transformation,

Zac stayed only a little while. 18 months and he was back with his mother. It seemed like I had failed. There was no happy ending, just a return to the deeply unsatisfactory biannual visits that allow me to be a tourist in his life. But our time together planted a seed that is germinating with Gospel slowness. Zac knows that I am in the world and that I love him. Maybe this will act as a beacon to draw my peregrinating son back to me one day? I hope he forgives me for failing to deliver the fairy-tale childhood. I hope he learns the lesson I have learned from being his father: small steps, small acts of mercy, small decisions to love, transform our hearts, change the world and draw us deeper into the mystery of the Son of God.

**Editorial Note:** The author, David, is 34 years old, married, and training to be a priest in the Anglican Diocese of Willochra, S. Australia.

## GHANA

The father in Ghana is regarded as the head of the family in accordance with Bible teaching. He is responsible for his children and his wife. He tends to be the breadwinner and protects the family. The father instills discipline in the home by moulding the family. He provides shelter, finance and education. The father also sees to the welfare of the mother of the house.

However, there are some who do not take up the responsibilities of the family. They spend less time at home, and more with their peer group and girl friends. Some also beat their children and wives and scare them. A few leave home when they have disabled children, blaming the mothers. Some also after divorce and remarrying will not look after the children. Some transfer some of the hatred they have for their wives to their children.

If the father is absent, the burden falls on the woman alone, bringing about bad habits and disease, especially when she is poor. The woman may be tempted to send the daughter out at an early age to beg, or to sell herself as a prostitute.

To strengthen fathers, the woman should be supportive of the man. She should also love and have patience and pray, because it can change things. The fathers should be encouraged and appreciated. There should be education for them.

In past tradition, all these things like providing shelter, food etc were the sole responsibility of the fathers; but now things are changing. Women are helping at home by providing food and finance, because of the changes in the economy. The father in the olden days was at home because of the nature of his work as carpenter, mason, farmer; so he had a lot of time for his family, but now he is outside and so the woman has taken the discipline. Most of the women are working at home, or around the home, but some of the men go out on treks to work, while others attend courses. Generally, with the present education being the main thing in the home, both the father and mother have realised that the responsibility is for both of them, but in the rural areas they still hold on to the old tradition.



### Young Fathers and Responsible Parenthood.

Services for fathers were not even thought about 40 years ago. In 1960, 81% of children in the United States were living with both their biological parents. In 1998, only 69% lived with both their parents and some researchers now predict that over half of all children in the U.S. will spend some time in a single parent family before they are 18. Research shows that children growing up with only one biological parent are twice as likely to drop out of school, five times more likely to be poor, and ten times more likely to be extremely poor. Girls are 2.5 times more likely to be a teen parent and boys are more likely to be imprisoned. The number of people getting divorced has risen dramatically and the number of people having children together, but not getting married, has increased even more. In 1997, a third of all children in the U.S. and 70% of all African-American children were born to unmarried parents. Although recent research shows that 50% of unmarried parents are living together at the time of the birth of their child, and another 30% report a romantic relationship at that time, the majority of unmarried fathers are not involved by the time their child is four.

The first public policy explicitly directed at men came in 1975, with the creation of the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. The main aim was to make sure that divorcing fathers supported their children to lessen the burden on the state. The focus of the child support agency has gradually changed to also encompass poor dads. There is a large group of dads (about 25% of the total number of non-custodial parents) who simply do not have the money to pay. It is ironic that since 1975, the wages of young men aged 16-25 have decreased by about 30%. The jobs that high-school dropouts could once get on the factory floor, in the mines, down at the shipyard, jobs that would allow them to support a family, no longer exist.

The work that my organisation (NPCL) is engaged in aims to provide community support services to young, low-income, never-married couples and their children to help them "get on their feet" and establish a team-parenting plan in the best interests of the children. Our new **Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration Project** builds on earlier work by focusing on support for young parents near the time of birth, with a strong emphasis on peer support and employment strategies with wage growth opportunities. The project, which is getting underway in 10 cities across the U.S., is designed to explore and demonstrate ways in which community-based fatherhood programmes and public agencies, particularly child support enforcement, can work together to strengthen fragile families.

The USA is now closer to a situation in which family support services are available for mothers, children and fathers. A Bill, passed by the House of Representatives, will



Young man in America.

Photo: Yulio Etchart/Panos Pictures.

shortly be considered by the Senate. This would provide \$150 million in federal grants to fatherhood programmes with the goal of promoting marriage and successful parenting, and helping low-income fathers improve their economic status through participation in job search, training, and subsidised employment. The next few years represents a real window of opportunity. Now we have to begin to show that this will truly make a difference in the lives of children.

Some of the major lessons learned over the last 25 years are:

- The fathers of children on welfare, like the mothers, are likely to have dropped out of school and are unlikely to have job skills that allow them to obtain "living wage" jobs. Low-income men face the same barriers to full-time, stable employment as do low-income women. In fact, African-American men may face more barriers than their female counterparts.
- There is a difference between "deadbeat" dads (a phrase often used in the media) who have the money to pay child support, but choose not to, and "dead-broke" dads who simply don't have the money to pay their child support bill - and who need help to get in a position to do so.
- Fathers will come to a programme that provides them with assistance with parenting and employment issues, but it may take a while to "get them in the door" - and they won't stay unless there is something meaningful for them. Offers of employment assistance are often the best recruitment incentives, but caring staff and peer-support activities are more likely to be what keeps them involved. Many of the men may not have experienced loving relationships with their own fathers. By providing love and support to fathers, programmes can help men to provide more loving, supportive environments for their children.

- Staff of family service programmes do not always readily accept the need to provide services to fathers, particularly in cases where staff members may have had negative experiences with men. This needs to be worked through.

- Most fatherhood programmes will need a legal assistance component to provide help with issues of child support, mediation, regular visitation or custody.

- Strengthening families and improving the life chances of children, requires supportive services for both parents. We need public funding for family support services that explicitly includes fathers. Similarly, all successful fathers' programmes must find ways to involve mothers.

- To reach and unite families, child support enforcement agencies need to be based more positively in the community, with "community satellites" from which staff can offer assistance to both custodial and non-custodial parents.

- Staff will need to understand the position of the young fathers, have the ability to give their clients hope, and the skills and connections to help them make and achieve goals. A successful programme needs strong community partnerships, the support of staff throughout the agency; ongoing staff development; consistent funding; clear goals and expected outcomes; and a comprehensive service strategy.

(Based on presentation given at Conference **Developing Effective Services for Fathers** held in London, UK November 1999.)

## ZAMBIA

The cultural patterns among the seventy plus tribes of Zambia are similar, especially in terms of fatherhood and parenting. Every male adult is expected to marry. Single adults, and even childless married couples, are stigmatised. Children are seen not only as an investment but also as a symbol of biological normality and status.

At the head of the family, the father is responsible not only for their welfare but also for the development of their personalities. Failure to provide the basic human needs is a sign of being irresponsible. Culturally, the responsibility to bring up children was shared between the mother and father with clearly defined responsibilities for the boys and the girls. It was therefore the responsibility of each parent to initiate this. Matters of morality, especially those bordering on sexuality, suffered a lot, since although the mothers found it a little easier to share with their girl children, fathers found it difficult to do so. Usually children were expected to learn from their grandparents, uncles or aunts, or pick it up from friends.

Unfortunately, we still have a large number of parents who are very irresponsible: fathers who carelessly spend their money on beer and other vices; fathers who spend more time away relaxing with friends, leaving the wives to take care of the homes.

Individual fathers must take the first step in order to strengthen their position. In the Church in Zambia we have now the Fathers' Union and one of their objectives is to work for the family. We can start with



Members of the Fathers' Union, Zambia.

our youth who are soon to be fathers, emphasising that it is a sin to produce more children than one can afford. Examples of suffering families abound in our society and these can be made the focus of our campaign.

Many fathers in Zambia now see the need to have small families as the economy gets worse and worse. More and more parents are beginning to be highly responsible and involved in the welfare of their families.

### Fathers' Union

The Fathers' Union in Zambia is modelled on the Mothers' Union. The six men who started the Fathers' Union, in Central Diocese in 1993, wanted to remedy the situation whereby most men did not take an active part in the Church and there was no organisation in the Church to address men's issues. Their objectives include:

- Teaching Christian marriage values and child upbringing.
- Providing opportunities for special meetings for Christian men.

The Fathers' Union has now spread to other Dioceses and the membership has grown to almost 500.

## NIGERIA

The Bible shows that God made husband/fathers heads of families *ab initio*. (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-23). Wives should submit to husbands, while husbands should love their wives and not be harsh with them. Fathers are requested not to embitter their children so that they will not be discouraged, but parents are admonished to bring up their children with Christian discipline and instruction. (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4). A father must manage his own family well and it is his duty to care and provide for them. (1 Timothy 3:4 and 5:8)

In contemporary Nigerian society, some men – especially those whose families are strongly grounded in Christianity – try to pay sufficient attention to their families and maintain nuclear family ties. However, quite a large number lose this sense of unity and are distracted by factors such as excessive wealth, mistresses outside wedlock, heeding the bad advice of "friends" and the dictates of relatives – especially sisters and sometimes mothers.

As for being heads of families and ruling over them, there is no problem. Our

society is male-oriented and the headship of men is not in dispute. Indeed, it is not negotiable. But it is the nature of the ruling that matters. While some fathers enjoy their superior position and occupy leading positions in the citizenry, while caring for their families in a respectful manner, others simply lord it over their families, especially their wives. Such fathers do not really command the respect of their children but are regarded as tyrants whenever they come home.

When wives submit, husbands should love them and not be harsh. Much of this depends on the degree of love, understanding and tolerance that exist in the home. The economic situation also has a bearing. When there is a balance of these factors, most men in this country will love their families. In affluence, they may even "spoil" their families. However, when the reverse situation is the case, the reverse results occur.

The task of bringing up children with Christian discipline and instruction is a joint responsibility and is not usually problematic in a Christian setting. But

when this setting is otherwise, or where a father is not committed, mothers bear the brunt alone and are often not successful in doing so. The punishment that should come from a father is not there and so correction is almost impossible. Indeed, there is a common saying that *when children go off the rails, mothers are to blame, but a well-behaved child becomes daddy's child*.

It is my humble suggestion that early introduction of children to religious organisations like the Church, exposure to Christian seminars, workshops and training, will help them to grow up and maintain Christian principles in later life. The Church should also organise seminars, debates, refresher courses and even film shows for married couples.



## CANADA

### On What a Man can do for a Child.

My grandson, Christian, is now 10 months old. During his latest move from one apartment to another, I am assigned the role of being Christian's pillow, so he can fall asleep. My daughter says my large stomach is ideal, and his falling asleep within two minutes seems to prove her right. As I rock Christian to sleep, I think about the part I will play in his life. I've had the experience of fathering my two children, and the focal part of my work is now helping other men deal with fathering. Being a grandfather though – this is something new. What do I know that I can apply here?

A few years ago, at a session of the **Single Fathers' Focus Group** that I co-led in North York, Ontario, the men were discussing the role of a father. All of them agreed their role was to "be there" for their children. One had arranged his work schedule so he could be there each day from the time his child got out of school until his estranged partner came home from work. Another had given up a basketball scholarship in the United States to be with the teenage mother when their baby was born. Neither of these young fathers had ever read the United Nations proclamation for the International Year of the Family (1994) – "The family provides the natural framework for the emotional, financial, and material support essential to the growth and development of its members, particularly infants and children" – but they were certainly living its ideals.

The Single Fathers' Focus Group was one of eight groups brought together to

look as what men in today's changing world think about the responsibilities and needs of fathers. My involvement with these men, who represented different cultures, ages, marital status and economic resources, challenged some of my ideas, confirmed others and gave me many new insights about the roles and needs of fathers.

One group had many members who had grown up without a father. They all believed it was their responsibility to be there for their children; however – not having been fathered themselves – they did not always know how to discipline or be affectionate.

In some of the focus groups, men had been raised in different cultures before immigrating to Canada. Some of what I took pride in when fathering my own children – such as sharing more of the household chores and the physical care of the children – these fathers often saw as confusing and different from their own experiences. The prospect of changing their fathering style to meet North American expectations brought a sense of separation from their own culture and belongings. They felt under pressure to change quickly without being convinced that it would benefit their children, and without much support or understanding from others about the difficulty of such a change. Once again, the theme of being there for their children prevailed, although how that might look was different.

The members of **Teen Fathers'** groups expressed anger at the stereotype that all teen fathers "get the girl pregnant and then leave". They expressed intense

commitment to their children. They wanted to be a part of their children's lives, including learning how to take care of them both physically and emotionally. An exceptional group of teenage fathers? Maybe. But maybe not. In any case, what I learned from them is that the stereotype can push them away from their children and reduce the opportunities for meaningful, healthy relationships between father and child.

Over and over, I heard from fathers about their need to talk to and support one another. Many asked if prenatal programmes could include at least one session for fathers-to-be to meet without their partners, as the men had concerns they were reluctant to bring up in the mixed group.

Being a father and working with fathers, has taught me the value of men being there for children and for each other and that being there can take many forms. Being a grandfather is reminding me how much children need physical and emotional support and Christian is showing me new ways to provide that support. (Who else would find my large stomach so appealing?) But my own enjoyment at being his pillow hints at a truth that is often forgotten: that men need children in their lives almost as much as children need men.

## TANZANIA



Mother and baby clinic, Tanzania.

Photo: Henry Allis/Panos Pictures.

In the Kasulu District, where the Diocesan headquarters are located, many men are trying hard to practise better fatherhood. There is increased love, respect and partnership between wife and husband. This is the foundation of good parenting. Parents now arrange a fair schedule for

fetching water, firewood and helping sick members of the family. Fathers are now giving equal opportunities for both sexes of their children. These achievements are the result of continuous holistic evangelism of God's love for all people, preached and spread by the clergy,

government, development workers, and other people of good will. The Diocese also helps with agricultural programmes. The income and yields from these help fathers to afford basic family needs.

Christian counselling education provided by the Mothers' Union and Theological Education by Extension also help young men to become responsible fathers.

However, there are still members of our community who take less responsibility for their families. Most of them say that the prevalence and intensity of poverty does not allow them to afford basic family needs. Also there are fathers who think that wives are responsible for parenting. These people are the target group for our holistic evangelism campaign. We are glad that our Lord is enabling us to work together with needy families to gradually improve fathers' parenting attitudes.

# INDIA



Father and son, slum dwellers of Calcutta.

Photo: Sean Sprague/Panos Photos.

A proper assessment of the role of fathers in Indian families can be made only if it is studied in the light of the twin social systems that have existed in India for a long time: caste and patriarchy. Caste and patriarchy are closely inter-related and they support one another in making the lives of many millions of women miserable. If caste as an oppressive social system divides society both horizontally and vertically, patriarchy does the same thing in the family.

While caste is a very distinct social evil found in India, patriarchy is a universal phenomenon. However, it may be said that due to a strong religious legitimisation, patriarchy has been manifested in some of its most inhuman forms in different periods of Indian history: for example the wide prevalence of obnoxious practices of *sati* (wife burning on the husband's funeral pyre) and the horrendous plight of widows.

As related to a father's role in Indian families, especially in relation to the upbringing of children, the following observations may be made:

- Generally, there is a graded hierarchical structure in traditional families which is rooted in patriarchal culture. The father is on top, followed by his son, if he is nearly grown-up. The female members are below them with the mother coming next, followed by the daughters.
- Fathers are generally considered as head and breadwinner of the family. Although in rural areas, women generally do the household work as well as the field work, and in cities an increasing number of wives are employed, fathers still continue to be credited as "bread-winner". However

much a mother toils to bring up the children and struggles to keep the dignity and family economy intact, in a traditional family, unfortunately, her sacrifices count for very little. On the other hand, many fathers fall into alcoholism, gambling and extra-marital activities and fail in their minimal parental duty to feed and educate their children. In spite of their failure to fulfil their responsibilities, often fathers try to wield power as "head of the family", making the lives of their wives and children inescapably miserable.

- A father generally gets royal treatment at home. He generally enjoys the best of everything and presents a different picture of himself to the self-giving image of the mother.
- In a traditional family, the father takes little or no interest in the upbringing of the children. However, when they come of age, then he tends to dictate terms relating to their marriage, giving little space for their own desires and aspirations. Fathers rarely take care of their infants – bathing, feeding or pacifying children falls outside their stereotyped gender role. They feel that helping their wives in household chores is below their dignity. It is interesting that even the wife does not like him helping in household work. This points out how the culture of gender discrimination has deeply internalised gender victims (women) themselves.
- The traditional father transmits only negative influences on his children. Sons have value, status and pride. Fathers are overjoyed at a son's birth, but frown if more than one daughter is born! A daughter is often

considered as a liability/burden. She feels gender discrimination even from her mother and brother(s). In a discriminating family atmosphere, the daughters are prone to develop insecure complexes and behavioural problems. On the other hand, the sons very soon internalise within themselves the role model of their fathers and become quite assertive. Sometimes daughters are cheated or denied their rightful share in parental property by brothers.

The above-noted features are generally typical of traditional patriarchal families. However, it should not be construed that human feelings and affection have no place in such families. On the contrary, there may be numerous cases of self-giving and affectionate fathers even in families which are traditionally patriarchal. How is this possible? The indigenous culture of India is quite egalitarian, comprising many communitarian values. Perhaps due to this and also because of a simple piety, strong in ordinary men and women, a good deal of communitarian and familial feelings and bonds still exist in Indian society. Fortunately, caste and patriarchy have not fully succeeded in destroying these bonds.

Yet the stranglehold of patriarchy is still strong on a large section of the Indian population. Therefore, there should be a continued mission to destroy this stranglehold, so that husband and wife and parents and children may live and grow together more as partners and friends. It is very gratifying to see a positive change is already taking place, especially among the fathers. The enlightened father today has begun to accept his wife as partner and his children as friends. He does not mind whether the child is a daughter or a son. This is indeed a remarkable change. Several women's organisations and movements too are contributing considerably to the growth of this new outlook. As far as the Indian Church is concerned, it should consider participation in the struggle against sinful patriarchal culture as part of its mission, and be fully engaged in it. However, it is also very important that simultaneously the Church should also shed out the vestiges of that discriminating culture from its own body so as to make its witness meaningful and authentic.

**The author acknowledges the insights contributed by Mrs Elizabeth Joy from Bangalore.**

## AUSTRALIA

"He just goes out to work."



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University of Edinburgh.

In 1998, the Australian Government hosted the first National Men and Family Relationships Forum and called for funding submissions for pilot programmes in this area. Anglicare Western Australia was successful and obtained AUD \$520,000 to pilot a range of programmes for men.

Anglicare WA's submission was based on the conviction that a piecemeal approach to services for men is of limited value and that men need an integrated set of programmes which address their needs in all contexts of their lives. The programmes speak to the needs of men as individuals, as husbands or partners, as fathers or father figures, and as employees. Each programme takes a reflective, non-judgmental approach.

Three core programmes will be offered regularly:

- 'The Man's Journey' addresses the stages of life that men commonly go through and offers resources to help men manage those stages.
- 'Men and Marriage' addresses the common problems men have in marriage and the skills needed to enhance a marriage (or long-term committed relationship).
- 'Men as Fathers' addresses parenting skills in general and the role of fathers in particular, in families as a whole and in the individual lives of their children.

Three additional programmes will be offered occasionally:

- 'My Story, Our Story, The Big

Story,' a residential weekend for men who want to reflect more deeply on their life journey individually, in relationships, and in the context of their spiritual framework.

- 'Understanding Men/Understanding Women,' a short series of seminars on current issues in gender relations, and the impact on relationships of gender differences and personality differences.

- 'The Work-Family Seminars,' introductory talks to community groups and work sites on balancing work and family demands.

We are delighted to be part of an innovative movement towards holistic, specialist services for men. Too many men find themselves feeling lost in life and in some situations marginalised in their families, and without the skills to do much about either. "It is time" said the Chief Executive of Anglicare WA, "that we as a society stopped criticising men and started speaking to their needs at a deep level and in a way which honours their predicament in this time of rapid social change." By better resourcing men for their individual journeys and strengthening their functioning as partners and fathers, Anglicare WA hopes to make a long-term difference in the lives of those men who access their services, and their families.

## TASMANIA

Tragically, of the estimated 51,000 divorces in Australia in 1999, over half involved fathers with a total of 52,000 children. After separation, nine in every ten of these children live with their mothers. So last year some 47,000 children stopped living with their fathers. This includes nearly 1500 children in Tasmania.

In Tasmania, more marriages end in divorce than any other Australian state, with almost 2000 children affected each year. Added to these sobering figures are the "de facto" relationships, which are not included in these statistics.

Anglicare, Tasmania has launched a new programme called **Tools for Men** focusing on counselling, skills development and community awareness and education. Recently, we combined with other community services to conduct an information stall at the Royal Hobart Show. The stall provided an opportunity to highlight issues that are relevant to men in relationships and especially as husbands and fathers. We received many encouraging comments.

In developing the programme we have been asked "Why have a service for men?" The reasons include broad community concern for the impact of broken relationships resulting in divorce, resentment and pain. Also, men have their own issues in families and relationships, and have faced huge social changes. We endeavour to build on most men's strong commitment to their families.

The programme looks at getting started with relationships or getting a relationship back on track. Indeed, it can look at anything that gets in the way of a relationship, or fathering, including helping men through the issues of being a contact father – or simply figuring out being a father.

While the programme offers limited resources, it is able to provide male counsellors and access to information. It is exploring after-hours work and out-of-office locations. We are able to look at such diverse issues as work settings, self-esteem, relationships with partners and children, and changing cultural environments – particularly for men who are socio-economically disadvantaged.



## GHANA

### A case of Doubtful Paternity

Kofi, a 22 year-old student was mentioned by Abena, a 15 year-old, as being responsible for her pregnancy. Kofi agreed that he had sexual relationships with Abena. He argued that he used condoms and the lady was a month pregnant before this and he could not be responsible for the baby. Abena 's family filed a writ at the Koridua Family Tribunal seeking the order of the Tribunal to ensure that Kofi honour his parental responsibility to Abena and her unborn child. Kofi's family, wanting to protect the image of their family, withdrew the case from the Tribunal for an out-of-court settlement. Despite the continuous denial of Kofi of his paternity, his family has agreed to honour the parental responsibility for the pregnancy and to take care of Abena.

If Kofi's family had decided to contest the case, even if they won, they would have had to provide a non-refundable deposit of about 350 US dollars to the Tribunal to conduct a paternity test. Kofi was not employed, and it would be very difficult for his family to raise the deposit and to accompany Kofi to the Tribunal. Also the trial procedure could take many months.

Due to the harsh economic situation in Ghanaian society, some women both young and elderly, often unmarried, try to survive by having more than one sexual partner at a time. When they get pregnant, they often hold one of their partners responsible for the pregnancy. Often it is the man whom they feel has the financial resources to take better care of them. To them, the fellow who was biologically responsible for the pregnancy was a secondary matter.

In a situation like that of Kofi, who was certain that he was not responsible for the pregnancy but had to accept the paternal responsibility for the pregnancy, such fathers tend to lose fatherly love for the child.

To avoid some of these traumatic situations, it is important that churches and youth organisations should intensify their education of members of the Church of the need to avoid pre-marital sexual relationships. There is a need for the Church to develop a strong family counselling unit that could offer counselling services, and where necessary some material support, to couples who find themselves in such situations, to help them to settle down and to plan for the future of the child to be born and their relationship.

## SCOTLAND

Concern with the healthy functioning of Britain's families has given rise to a series of initiatives in education, health, employment, child care and parenting.

While a drive to promote better equality parenting is welcome, the reality is that the main beneficiaries of this ever-growing array of programmes continue to be mothers. There is little evidence of proactive measures to engage in a meaningful way with fathers or to identify the unique value of their parental involvement in the nurture and development of children.

At the same time, there is growing evidence that the consequences of absent, emotionally unavailable or abusive fathers are far-reaching for children, particularly for boys. Absence of fathers, research evidence suggests, leads to greater risk of under-achievement, aggression and persistent offending.

Inversely, there is evidence that where there is active involvement of fathers, children are more likely to:

- be sensitive to the needs of other people;
- get on well with other people;
- be positive and confident.

In Australia and Finland, government policy on parenting ensures that fathers are equipped with information, advice and support. In the USA, there is large-scale investment in projects to help fathers.

In Scotland, as in the rest of Britain, apparently many fathers would like to improve and build upon relationships with their children. Yet surveys reveal a worrying picture:

- The average father with children under 11 years of age works 48 hours a week and spends on average 6 minutes a day communicating with his children.
- 50% of divorced fathers lose contact with their children within two years.
- There are no automatic paternal rights and responsibilities for

A good dad takes time for his family and is loving and caring and does all he can for his family



unmarried fathers – yet the numbers of couples choosing not to marry continues to increase.

- No support network or information/material on fathering.

Arberlour Child Care Trust is a Scotland-wide voluntary organisation providing services to children and families, particularly those threatened by disadvantage or deprivation.. Established originally by an Episcopalian clergyman over 100 years ago, Aberlour Child Care Trust is currently concerned about the neglected issue of fathering. Through the appointment of a National Development Officer, we want to work to influence social attitudes and raise the profile of this issue through the media, the provision of information and consultancy and training.

To complement this promotional work we intend to:

- support and encourage net-working of agencies interested in this area of work;
- develop materials and resources for a variety of needs;
- develop a range of groups and support for young men and fathers;
- encourage employers and policy-makers to promote father-friendly policies;
- promote continuity of father-child relationship when relationships with partners break down.

We will be encouraged to hear from everyone interested in this work.



## ENGLAND

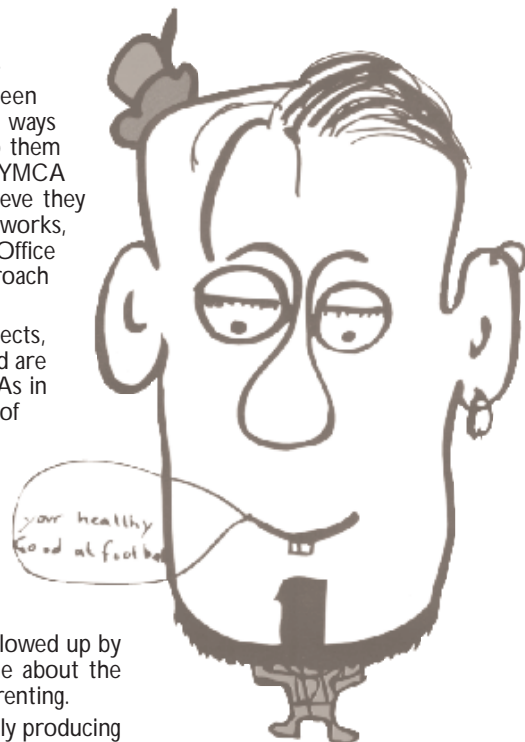
### Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Care for the Family's "Dads and Lads" Projects

A lot of people have been scratching their heads to find ways of working with men to help them in their role as fathers. The YMCA and Care for the Family believe they have found an approach that works, and have been given Home Office funding to develop the approach across the country.

The "Dads and Lads" projects, which started in Plymouth and are now running at several YMCAs in England, use a shared love of football as a way of bringing fathers and sons together. The projects organise football sessions for fathers and sons, providing valuable - and fun - time together. The sessions last for a couple of hours, and are sometimes followed up by a friendly chat after the game about the kids and the challenges of parenting.

Care for the Family is currently producing a set of resources to support the project, including a magazine for fathers, which will be available in May. Training for group leaders will also be provided. The YMCA is able to supply a limited number of groups in UK with free training, resources and a small start-up grant.

"(Dad is) always playing footba "



## INDIA

"One who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence.

I, Timothy 3:4

The topic given by the International Anglican Family Network is very useful. Through this Network, fathers may have a thought to develop their families in a better way; at the same time the parents who do not take responsibility for their families will have a new look to change their attitudes.

As per the Holy Bible, the father is an important person in the family who leads his family in a better position and makes them witnesses to the Lord Almighty God.

In the present world also, the father of the family is a most important person, having responsibilities in the family affairs of finance, development, education, day to day needs etc. The father also plans out the family members' welfare.

If the father is alive there is no difficulty because he will solve the problems in the family as well as outside in the society.

The father always makes his good efforts to control the family, whereas the mother shows her love to the family members and obedience to her husband. In our areas, most fathers have good parenting abilities and use the talents given by God for the betterment of their families.

In my own family, development measures taken by my father and mother gave good teaching right from our growing stage. The three sons and three daughters now work as teachers, evangelists, health visitors and a Bishop's wife.

Some fathers are not loved by the family because they will not feel their responsibilities and always they will create problems because of their bad habits which were not accepted by the family and society.

## SUDAN

In the Sudan, the father and mother are the strong figures in the family. There is no decision ever taken without the involvement of the other. The father is the head and the mother is the executive manager of the family, a minister of the treasury. Looking after the children is a joint venture, and the parents exert all their efforts in caring for them.

The prevailing and devastating war in combination with drought, famine and disease has caused the displacement of over one and a half million civilians. Such an unwanted movement, caused by man-made and natural calamities, has disrupted both business and agriculture. Moreover, a good number of parents have been uprooted and have migrated into the neighbouring countries. These deleterious forces operating upon the fathers and mothers and everybody have entailed their starvation, poverty and death. Some parents, among whom are the clergy, have lost all their properties. Some have their limbs and arms amputated, and others have their eyes plucked out in the agony and horror of the devastating battle.

Some parents have been separated from their children by this terrible war, which has interrupted the programme of bringing up their children. The children suffer most.

So the Christian fathers and mothers have to be actively involved in mediating the peace and reconciliation, fostering the spirit of forgiveness. This peace initiative has to come and grow from the grass roots level, which is durable because it is owned by them. They have to identify the causes of the conflicts and devise a mechanism for resolving the national crises. Because through God, all hearts would be transformed.



Dinka father and son in Nasir after a 12-day trek to escape fighting.

Photo: Martin Adler/Panos Photos.

## ZAMBIA

### Impact of HIV/AIDS

With HIV/AIDS cases and the number of deaths increasing, the number of people with no family support is also increasing. The extended family system – the main social safety-net for the majority of Zambians – is becoming ineffective. The continuous loss of close acquaintances has left many caregivers, mainly women, both helpless and in a state of apparent hopelessness.

**The Salvation Army Australia** and the Australian Agency for International Development have funded a programme at The Salvation Army's Chikankata Hospital to educate people about HIV/AIDS. Part of that training includes basic Home-Based Care and the concept and practice of the Care and Prevention Team (CPT).

Care and Prevention Teams is a strategy to accelerate community realisation of the resources available within the community to support the weak and sick. In the area surrounding Chikankata Hospital, many widows are heading homes due to HIV/AIDS. This is not to suggest that more men than women are dying of AIDS, but when a man dies he often leaves a number of wives behind due to the prevailing polygamous culture. In a village close to the hospital, the concept of the Care and Prevention Team was introduced by the Chikankata counsellors. The community accepted the strategy and agreed to try it. As in most African communities, the headman and other men in the villages have authority whilst the women do most of the work. What is unusual about this village is that the men are working side by side with the women in caring for people with AIDS. The men recognise that the survival of their community depends on their involvement and in devising ways of caring



*Male members of a Care and Prevention Team, Zambia.*

for orphaned children. Both men and women are actively involved in the planning and implementation of the programme.

Success is due partly to the vision and drive of the headman who negotiated with a local landowner to let the village use a portion of his land to grow fruit and vegetables and to establish a fish farm. Many villagers are involved in the farming of this plot and the produce is both shared amongst the community and sold for profit which is deposited into the CPT bank account.

On a visit to the village, it is possible to observe meetings of the CPT where the men speak openly of their attempts to change attitudes to certain cultural activities which increase the chance of

AIDS, e.g. sexual cleansing. There is a consensus within the village that men also need to be responsible for the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS, for the care of people living with AIDS and for the orphans of AIDS victims.

The essence of Care and Protection Teams is not new – the concept has existed in Zambian communities for a long time. However the impact of the AIDS epidemic has caused men to revisit and resurrect the traditional ways of caring for their community.

## KENYA

Traditionally, the father has been head of the family and owned everything. His wife (or wives) looked after his property, cared for the children and remained at home. Christianity, money economy and modern education have shifted the role and the position of the woman. Monogamy has become the norm. Families are moving from extended to nuclear. The economic revolution has moved the woman from home to compete for jobs with men. We now have women who are professional lawyers, teachers, priests, secretaries. There are families living in cities where one or both parents are working. But we still have more men working in the cities than

women, thus leaving a good number of wives at the ancestral homes carrying on with heavy responsibilities of caring for the farm and the children. Some will see their husbands at the end of the month or even at the end of a year!

This affects both the wife, the children and the man, who does not enjoy adequate time with his family. This results in a high rate of promiscuity among the separated partners. Children lose the concept of paternal love and protection. I know of a father who will only come home at the end of the month, not to bring assistance to the family but to collect the money which the wife will

have earned from their tea sales which is inadequate to feed their nine young children. His children hate him.

But the modern father has lost many privileges which he traditionally enjoyed, sometimes at the expense of the wife. Many husbands now assist their wives in doing household work. There are situations where the wife is the sole breadwinner or more educated than her husband. We now have women members of Parliament who spend more time in politics than with their families. We now have lonely fathers, who need encouragement in such issues as domestic pressures and unemployment.



Proud father.

Photo: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures.

## Fathers' Associations

Recently, a number of local churches came up with Fathers' Association (FA) groups. There is a high rate of growth of this involvement. In the Diocese of Thika, for example, I enrolled as many men to the FA as I enrolled women to the Mothers' Union last year. The FA members meet to encourage each other and to pray together. They have four main objectives for their members:

- To ensure that the family is spiritually nourished through the reading of Scriptures and in praying together.
- To keep the marriage vows to ensure a life-long contract.
- To meet together with others and to plan to visit those who may need spiritual encouragement.
- To plan for courses geared towards strengthening of their union.

The FA endeavours to promote strong

family units and church development and outreach. The Association, like the Mothers Union, is planning projects at Diocesan level to help the needy. Kenya is suffering greatly from the HIV/AIDS scourge with many orphans left to the mercy of society.

The Fathers Association wants to rehabilitate the street boys who have been in the increase in the area. We now have "families" of these youngsters. They are beggars during the day and often satisfy themselves with the left-overs from dustbins. They turn to drugs to help them forget their many problems. The FA plans to raise funds to build a home for them so as to make them live as a family, provide education and spiritual nourishment and enable them to live a normal life. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27).

## TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

The changing roles within families brought on by global economic and other social changes has not bypassed Trinidad and Tobago. The changing "traditional role" of women, who increasingly now function within the family as sole breadwinner, single parent, career professional, joint breadwinner and home manager, has also added to the dynamics within the family situation.

There has been a strain in gender relations, possibly a superstitious reaction to more independent, educated and assertive women, in what might be considered a patriarchal society. In many places, it appears as though women are dominating – as teachers, as churchgoers and at home. There appears to be some "male rebellion" to this new development, as evidenced by murders and suicides, estranged relationships and domestic violence, particularly against women.

The fathering role is receiving considerable attention and there is quite a lot of good fathering: fathers who ensure that their children are well placed in universities abroad; fathers who endure great hardship to provide for their families; fathers who risk disfavour by pursuing traditional "old fashioned" principles of child-rearing and family management; fathers whose provision of care, security and love is exemplary.

However, there have also been some negative experiences of fatherhood: poor

maintenance of families; various forms of abuse; and psychological and emotional trauma, brought about by foreign influences which tend to fracture human relationships. Recently, a Senator, speaking to a Bill on family relationships, called for a more drastic approach in dealing with fathers who had fled the country in a bid to escape their responsibility.

Where the role of the father is not strong, there is the resultant strain on the other parent. There is negative imaging of male roles, or lack of adequate counter-balance to negative peer pressure among children. There is the general feeling that improved parenting on the whole will result in less delinquency and teenage indiscretions. Besides, the Church strives for the ideal of both parents sharing the responsibility for stable and effective family life. It applauds and treasures the invaluable contribution of the extended family (which is not as widespread in these days, and may be more rural in distribution) – in transmitting enduring values and acting as a support system for busy and stressed parents.

Recently, the Church has combined with the Health Department, through publications and radio broadcasts, to celebrate fatherhood. The Anglican Church in Trinidad and Tobago has been a significant partner in addressing family disruption through St Michael's Home for Boys and the St Mary's Children's Home. More pro-actively, the Church has

emphasised a focus on the father, through its men's ministry of the Anglican Church Men's Society and the Men's Fellowships. It has been stressed that marriage and baptism preparation, preaching and visitation, should not lack in giving support and direction to the role of fathers. Some concern has been expressed about the development of the "barrel children". Their parent/s live and work in the US, trying to make ends meet, thereby reducing parenting to lavishing these children with trendy clothing and accessories (sent by the barrels: thus "barrel children") at the expense of emotional and other needs. The ripple effect of this on peers and family life is disconcerting.

Further, there have recently been at least three ecumenical activities which focused on the father, and called for support, forgiveness and reconciliation in the process of strengthening fatherhood. Similarly, there is some evidence of a growing willingness in many fathers to adjust to changing roles and circumstances. This is partly evidenced by the apparent willingness of many fathers in responding to pastoral initiatives and encounters – a very different response to that of some years ago.



### Parenting Courses in Coldingley Prison.

In Guildford Diocese, members of the Mothers' Union were invited to join a small group to run Parenting Courses for the men as part of the probation work within the prison. Such courses are vital as part of their rehabilitation. There are proven statistics that men returning to a stable family environment are far less likely to re-offend. The course affirms the men as parents, helping them to maintain relationships often in very difficult circumstances, to understand the problems of the remaining parent at home, and how they can still contribute. Some have broken relationships with their partners and children; some are fathers to children of different mothers; some have made the decision not to see any of their family while they are in prison; some have court orders against them because of addiction problems, some have told their children that they are away working. Throughout the course, all these issues are dealt with. Many of the men have not been able to consider the consequences of their decisions, which have often been made out of their concern for their families or for themselves.

Within the prison, the men quickly become institutionalised, and the focus is on them, their criminal offence, their sentence and rehabilitation. The men as husbands, partners and fathers seem to get forgotten. On every course there has been breakthrough in broken relationships and even negotiation on court orders for access to see their children. None of this is done by course leaders. It happens as a result of building confidence and skills in the men as fathers, showing them ways to focus on and appreciate their children. Enabling them to negotiate and listen to others who have the major concern for their children and to understand that relationships take time and effort is a slow process. Though we are always amazed at how quickly broken relationships can be turned around.

All of the men who attend the course are struggling with parenthood. It is especially difficult to maintain relationships as an absent parent. Some have additional problems, having experienced poor parenting themselves. The course provides an opportunity to explore many issues such as "Rules and Discipline". Over the ten weeks, each session explores the topic using a variety of methods. Sharing experiences within the group as leaders and participants enables the men to feel valued. Guidance is gentle, enabling the men to discover and draw conclusions themselves. Much of the teaching is an example of parenting itself. None of us is the "perfect parent" and it is affirming for the men to see the group leaders vulnerable and not

always having the right answers.

As the course progresses, friendships develop among the prisoners. They develop a concern for one another. They learn about each other's families, often sharing painful problems. By the end of the course, the leaders' roles have diminished as the men have grown more confident. They have already put into practice some of the skills they have developed when their families have visited or by re-establishing contact by telephone.

By affirming them as fathers and giving them a wider understanding of parenthood – joys and difficulties – many of the men are able to be positive about themselves and their own abilities within the family situation.

As Christians, we are able to show the love of Christ, to be compassionate, not to be judgmental and to accept the men as they are. This is not to over-sentimentalise their position. They are in prison having committed a crime. A few, in time, will talk about their crimes and sentences, particularly if they are concerned about the effect on their children. Our concern is for them, as fathers to their children who need them. Please pray for this work to continue, for God's hand to be reaching into other prisons through this work.



### PRAYER

Beloved Parent God,  
We praise you and give thanks for all good, kind, fathers everywhere.  
We give thanks for fathers who nurture and protect their families.  
We give thanks for fathers who are gentle and patient,  
We give thanks for fathers who are strong in times of trouble.  
We give thanks for fathers who teach their children how to pray.  
Lord, we commit all fathers to your loving care.  
May they grow in faith and wisdom, and be an inspiration to other families around them.  
May their homes be blessed by your spirit of love.  
In the name of your dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

(Angela Griffiths, UK.)

### NEXT NEWSLETTERS

The next newsletter will link with the last article in this issue and be on the theme of **Prisons and Families**.

We want to hear about the effects of imprisonment on families – both those in prison and their partners and children. What is the Church and Christians, throughout the Anglican Communion, doing to help such families? What more could/should be done? Please send articles and information (no more than 500 words) to the address below.

We need to receive articles for this issue by **May 22nd 2000**.

The following newsletter, for Advent, will be called **Faith in the Family**.

This aims to find out more about how families across the Anglican Communion celebrate, share and transmit their Christian faith.

We want to hear about some of these issues:

- In a fast-changing multi-faith and secular society, what are some of the difficulties in the way of the development of faith in Christian families?
- How can parents best teach their children about the faith and the Church?
- How do families celebrate their faith – for example by prayer, baptism and at Christmas?
- How do families react to members who have no belief?
- What are the Churches and church organisations doing to strengthen the growth of faith within families and what more could/should be done?

We hope that this newsletter will provide examples of success and of failures, helping readers to learn of good practice throughout the Anglican Communion and of ways forward towards a stronger faith across the generations.

Articles (no more than 500 words) and information for the **Faith in the Family** newsletter should reach the IAFN office (address below) by the **end of August 2000**.

IAFN International Anglican Family Network

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