

Report of Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative (ECGI) Core Group Meeting St Columba's in Woking, UK, from 11 to 15 January 2010

Following the resolution passed by the ACC-14 to establish the Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative, a Core Group of Animators was appointed that had its first meeting under the chairmanship of Bishop Patrick Yu of York-Scarborough – Toronto, Canada.

This meeting took place at St Columba's in Woking, UK, from 11 to 15 January 2010. It brought together a representative group from all nine regions of the Anglican Communion and those with church or agency based mission experience. This small but diverse group of bishops, clergy and lay, men and women were chosen because of their involvement in, and passion for, evangelism and church growth work. Due to various reasons including visa problem, four members of the Core Group could not be present. The meeting was enriched and characterised by a rhythm of prayer - morning Eucharist and Evening prayers.

St Columba's being situated in Guildford Diocese, the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev Christopher Hill, and Mrs Hill, hosted a welcome reception for the group on one of the evenings. This gesture of hospitality and the presence of the Diocesan Mission Director at the reception was greatly appreciated by the group.

The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, the Revd Canon Kenneth Kearon also graced the meeting for half a day, and his presence and participation underscored the affirmation and support for this Initiative by the whole Anglican Communion and its Instruments.

During the meeting, the Group emphasised the need to understand evangelism and church growth in the wider context of the holistic mission framework, and to appreciate the interface between social outreach and evangelism, and how they inform and compliment each other.

The Core Group highlighted the importance of understanding evangelism and church growth work in the ways in which this work is valued and practiced within different traditions of the Anglican Communion and therefore hopes that all parts of the Communion will participate openly in this Initiative and share with each other.

The Core Group noted that evangelism and church growth work ought not to be about "planting Anglicanism" but that as much as possible we should work with those other churches who may already be present in particular areas, aware that we have a specific Anglican contribution to make. This would not only avoid unnecessary competition but could also ensure the effectiveness of Christian witness and proper use of mission resources.

The Core Group also observed that there was plentiful and rich variety of mission resources within and beyond the Anglican Communion for evangelism and church growth work but that there has never been an adequate mechanism to help make available this resource to the people who need it within the Communion. The ECGI therefore would help to provide such a forum where various resources for mission can be shared.

The Core Group reflected on and affirmed the following purpose and objectives:

Purpose - to promote evangelism and church growth work throughout the Anglican Communion and facilitating the sharing of news, stories, experiences and strategies of various evangelism and church growth initiatives.

ECGI is committed to holistic mission, as expressed in the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission, and is intended to enhance collaborative work and mutual support of those involved in evangelism and church growth in parishes, dioceses and provinces of the Anglican Communion, in order to bring people to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and become life long disciples within the community of God's people.

Objectives:

- Facilitate prayer and mutual encouragement;
- Develop strategies to reach unreached peoples;
- Recommend resources & facilitate sharing of good practice;
- Encourage training in evangelism and church growth for the whole people of God;
- Sharing stories, news and strategies
- Identify key issues for specific consultation;
- Build links with other evangelism and church growth networks within and beyond the Anglican Communion.
- Encourage practical engagements in evangelism and church growth as signs of hope
- Promote the centrality of evangelism and church growth within God's holistic mission to be on people's agenda throughout the Provinces and Instruments of Communion

1 Facilitating prayer and mutual encouragement

Prayer is a very vital part of our Christian life and discipline, and therefore central to evangelism and church growth work. The ECGI sees the need to mobilise prayer for mutual support and encouragement, therefore all Anglicans are called to commit to prayer the various evangelism and church growth initiatives around the Communion, which is part of God's holistic mission to the world.

The ECGI Core Group believes that our practical engagements need to go hand in hand with our prayer life. There is therefore a need to:

- *Make use of various existing means of communication (website, blogs, newsletter, etc) and explore other ways of sharing prayer news, and prayers resources;*
- *Develop, as material increases, ECGI web pages within the Communion website and substantial links be provided to other resources;*
- *Publish a journal including theological reflection, stories (good practice) as well as prayers;*
- *Write prayers to use in the Anglican Cycle of Prayer and also get such prayers into provincial and diocesan cycles of prayers;*
- *Promote a prayer chain – the following prayer topics were suggested by the group*
 - For us to always be prepared to share the hope in us
 - For us to know the transforming power for God every day
 - For the Lord to provide adequate resources
 - For God's protection and guidance for those bearing witness in dangerous places
 - For church leaders to be facilitators of evangelism and church growth
 - For renewed enthusiasm in sharing the good news of Jesus in word and action
 - For the church of God to be united in mission and evangelism
 - For clarity of what the good news means for each member and community

2 Developing strategies for mission among unreached people groups

In the light of the Great Commission of Christ to His Church to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8); and conscious that the Anglican Communion, as part of the Church, is called to obey this commission (Matthew 28:18-20); and rejoicing in the resolution of the ACC 14 “to develop strategies to reach unreached peoples”; and conscious that many millions of people, particularly in the zone between latitude 10 north and latitude 40 north in Africa, the Middle East and Asia (the 10-40 window – 1.7 billion people) have never had the opportunity of hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ; and conscious that much wonderful and dedicated work is being done by provinces and dioceses of our Communion (and by other Christians) among these people groups; **we are passionately concerned to see that this work be strengthened, and that, where necessary, new initiatives (missionary bishops, clergy and laity) be undertaken with the authority, blessing and support of the Communion.**

In order to fulfil this objective there is the need to:

- *research what Anglicans and other churches are already doing amongst the unreached people groups.*
- *consult with primates, bishops and representatives of provinces and dioceses involved in mission in these regions*
- *research where the greatest and most strategic needs may be*
- *explore financial and personnel resources for these mission initiatives*
- *develop strategies for mission among the unreached people groups*
- *promote prayer and necessary support for this undertaking*

In working towards this, the Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative and the Mission Department of the Anglican Communion Office, commit themselves to take the necessary steps for this process to move forward, and also seek the encouragement and support both from those at grass root level and those with authority at the highest level within the Anglican Communion.

“Christ’s love compels us” (2 Corinthians 5:14) to share the message of his love with the many millions among these people groups.

- *In discussing this objective the Core Group was aware of debates within the mission community about the use of the term ‘Unreached People Groups’ and encourages churches to develop an appropriate Anglican understanding and terminology for holistic mission work amongst those who have least opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ, wherever they may be.*
- *In considering the question as to whether Anglicans could bring a specific contribution in areas where other Christians were working, it was agreed that Anglican worship can provide a sense of order and structure in worship that can appeal to Muslims; The fourfold balance of word, worship, spirit and justice can appeal to Muslims and others.*
- *An initial action plan was agreed on how to proceed on this front.*

3 Recommending resources & facilitate sharing of good practice

The Core Group emphasised the need to make available the various resources both within and outside the Anglican Communion to those who may need them, noting that many who have access to mission resource are willing to share with others.

In order to attain this objective, there is need to:

- *Develop and recommend a (printed and online) bibliography of existing resource books and documents, and to constant update*
- *Develop and recommend a database of various forms of resources, with continuous update, and also share such information through the ECGI newsletter*
- *Recommended the networks represented at the Core Group meeting and other resources to the whole Church - such as Growing the Church, Faith2Share, Alpha, Anglican Frontier Mission, also Natural Church Development, etc.*
- *Recommend courses and institutes from different parts of the Anglican spectrum and beyond.*
- *Put an initial list of resources compiled by the Core Group on the ECGI website pages*

As membership grows, there will be need to explore and encourage the possibility of linking various evangelism and church growth initiatives to each other and to the ECGI website hosted by the Anglican Communion Office.

4 Encouraging training in E&CG for the whole people of God

The Core Group noted that God calls the Church to participate in His Mission, and therefore mission is a responsibility of the whole people of God (men & women, young and old, lay and ordained). This therefore underlines the need to equip the whole people of God (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The Core Group also recognised the need to explicitly spell out that whole life discipleship is an essential part of the process of evangelism and church growth, and that not only must evangelism include discipleship, but discipleship must also include evangelism.

In order to fulfil this objective there is need to:

- *Identify who/where appropriate training is offered and available*
 - *Within the Anglican Communion - diocesan/provincial institutions, mission organisations, para-church, individual initiatives, etc;*
 - *Ecumenically – local & global;*
- *Give credibility to training resource from outside of the Communion so that they are recognised, affirmed, accepted and used;*
- *Develop appropriate training resources to meet identified need and changing cultural patterns of today's society;*
- *Promote sharing of training resources as appropriate among those involved in evangelism and church growth;*
- *Develop and make available a “one-stop-shop” database at the Anglican Communion Office for the various training resources available in the Communion;*
- *Ensure that training (such as theological education) includes envisioning of leaders.*

5 Sharing stories, news and strategies

The Core Group recognised the importance of telling and sharing stories about what is working well in different contexts of the Communion and beyond, including the challenges faced and lessons learnt. Inspiring stories often encourage, edify and also challenge those who listen to them, and have an ability to motivate people to get involved, do more, and to continue being involved in God's mission.

The Core Group also noted that accessing information from parishes, dioceses and provinces will not always be easy but were committed to work towards making as many resources as possible available for use within the Communion.

In order to realise this vision there is need to:

- *Encourage the importance of sharing stories and news of, and strategies for, evangelism and church growth work;*
- *Emphasise the diversity needed of people, mode, methodology and place etc;*
- *Create the right environment for stories to be told – including worship stories;*
- *Develop guidelines needed on collecting, shaping and sharing stories;*
- *Make use of existing and diverse traditional and modern channels and fora, including newsletter, radio, tape/CD, videos, DVD, interviews, blogg, Twitter, Facebook, sms, etc.*

6 Identifying key issues for specific consultation

While the Core Group does not encourage conferences for the sake of it, it recognised the need to identify key subjects for regional or global consultations, which would bring people together to reflect and strategise.

To help realise this vision, there is need to:

- *Encourage inter-diocesan, inter-provincial and regional collaboration and exchange knowledge, experiences, stories and news of, and strategies for evangelism and church growth work;*
- *Gather issues widely from around the Communion – not just the ones we are aware of, from a range stakeholders, such as evangelists, youth and young people, MU, men's groups, community development workers, etc;*
- *Determine the common, or shared, issues;*
- *Use existing documents including: Holistic Mission, Indaba, GCode (Decade mid-review), Lausanne, Ad Gentes etc;*
- *Make use of existing or planned consultations (both Anglican and ecumenical), rather than duplicating – such as All Africa Bishops' Conference, Edinburgh 2010 Conference, Lausanne III Congress, etc; also piggybacking on existing consultation with those Anglicans who could in attendance;*
- *Hold face to face consultations and also video-links, teleconferencing, web, publications etc, where possible.*

The Core Group would recommend that when a regional consultation is held on any given key topic, it would be a helpful practice to invite others from different regions, to give different perspectives.

7. Building links with and between other evangelism and church growth networks within and beyond the Anglican Communion.

The Core Group believes that the way evangelism and church growth work would be best enhanced in the Communion by building links with and between evangelism and church growth initiatives around the Communion and beyond.

Some of the organisations identified with potential resources for various evangelism and church growth initiatives include Faith2Share, Internet Evangelism, Growing the Church, Faith2Share, Alpha, Fresh Expressions, Church Army, SOMA, Anglican Frontier Mission, Anglimergent, WCC (Evangelism Desk), World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Mission & Unity), Lausanne Committee, 5015 Vision Network, Nigerian Evangelical Mission Alliance (NEMA), etc.

In order to achieve this vision there is the need to:

- *Develop and make available a database of organisations and institutions that have engaged in evangelism and church growth related work;*
- *Encourage Anglicans to develop close collaboration with organisations and institutions that have evangelism and church growth resources at local, regional and global levels;*
- *Provide web links of such organisations and institutions on a “one stop-shop” ECGI website at the Anglican Communion, for access to those who may need this information in the Communion;*
- *Encourage sharing of information about evangelism and church growth work, that is available in the Communion and beyond, with others involved at local, national, provincial, regional and global levels.*
- *Invite non-Anglicans to regional/global consultations as a way of encouraging cross learning.*

8. Encourage practical engagements in evangelism and church growth as signs of hope.

Noting that mission and evangelism is ‘more caught than taught’, the Core Group affirmed that whenever and wherever there are ECGI meetings there was the need to facilitate examples of practical engagements with the local context rather than to simply host “talk shops”!

To ensure this happens, there is need to:

- *Identify and use opportunities to engage in evangelism and church growth activities as is relevant to the context in which the meeting takes place;*
- *Meet in a variety of contexts and engage in practical local evangelism and church growth work;*
- *For the Core Group to ensure that practical engagements are facilitated during its residential meetings and also encourage others to do the same.*

9. Promote the centrality of evangelism and church growth within God’s holistic mission to be on people’s agendas throughout the Provinces and Instruments of communion.

Acknowledging that a lot is already happening in the Communion with regard to evangelism and church growth work, in all sorts of ways, there is still the need to continually put evangelism and church growth work on Communion’s agendas, from congregations and parishes through to dioceses and provinces up to the Instruments of Communion.

Functions of the Core Group

The main role of the **Core Group** is to facilitate:

- *Collaborative work*
- *Mutual support and prayer*
- *Sharing of resources, and*
- *To stir up the passion for action*

The Group will meet twice a year, with at least one of the meetings being residential.

Attendance:

1. Bishop Patrick Yu - Bishop of Scarborough-York, Toronto, Canada – Convenor
2. Bishop Bill Godfrey - Bishop of Peru
3. Mrs Linda Jones – Liverpool, England
4. Rev Canon Rosemary Mbogo - Kenya
5. Rev Trevor Pearce - South Africa
6. Bishop Ken Okeke - Church of Nigeria Missionary Society
7. Rev Canon Mark Oxbrow – Faith2Share - UK
8. Rev Dr Julian Linnell - Anglican Frontier Mission- USA
9. Rev John Kafwanka - Mission Department, Anglican Communion Office
10. Mr Stuart Buchanan – Mission Dept, Anglican Communion Office
11. Miss Tricia Neill - Alpha International - attended part of 11th and 12th
12. Rev Canon Kenneth Kearon – Anglican Communion Secretary General - part of 13th January

Not in Attendance:

1. Bishop Ng Moon Hing
2. Revd Antonio J. Kibwela Kifwambwa
3. Bishop Richard Naramana
4. Revd Irfan Jamil