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Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative—ECGI Newsletter

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Welcome to the 2nd edition of the ECGI Newsletter

I trust that you are as excited as I am about this possibility and the opportunity to enable collaboration around the Anglican Communion in this very important aspect of Mission. There is no doubt about the various evangelism and church growth initiatives going on in our churches, as now evidenced by the stories being shared through this newsletter. These and many unpublished stories reveal what God is doing through women and men, young people and adults, who have committed themselves, their skills and resources for the sake of the Gospel.

I must point out that ECGI is not simply about growing church in terms of numbers of church buildings or indeed church attendance, it is concerned both about "quantity" and "quality"! As Archbishop David Vunagi of the Province of



Melanesia said to me recently, "we have no problem with numbers in Melanesia, but we have a challenge in terms of people understanding why they go to Church. That is our task now, that is where we need support!"

Just as there are a variety of evangelism and church growth initiatives, there are also a variety of resources around the Anglican Communion and among our ecumenical part-

ners, which we wish to make available to all who may need. It is therefore important that you share with us or with a Core Group member in your region any resource that you know would benefit others. It is one of the ways we can be of mutual support to one another in God's mission.

I pray that as you read this newsletter you will be enriched and inspired in your own life and ministry by the experience of others. But I also trust that you will be able to share yours or the experience of those you know involved in evangelism and church growth work in your context or elsewhere.

May God bless your ministry!

John K. Kafwanka (Revd)
Director for Mission - Anglican Communion Office

Resource Web-pages

Amongst the purpose of ECGI we include 'Sharing stories, news and strategies' and 'Recommend resources & sharing good practices'. This newsletter is the obvious way to share stories, but we are limited by space to just a few hundred words for each article.

The website is the way that we can share longer articles and other material. This is now up and running so that you can read or download the material that has been sent to us. This includes a sections on **Resources** <http://www.aco.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/resources/index.cfm> that includes **Books** and **Web-sites** and a section on **Documents** <http://www.aco.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/documents/index.cfm> that includes some very helpful material from Nigeria and Kenya as well as the full report of the ECGI Core Group meeting last January. Within the Resource section, we also want to include **Organisations**, and profile some of the Anglican organisations, or organisations with Anglican roots that are a resource to those involved in evangelism and church growth. **For this to work we need you to send us your resources, so that we can add these to the web-pages. Please send material to stuart.buchanan@anglicancommunion.org**

The Anglican Communion Office can take no responsibility for the appropriateness of the content of these resources, but they have been recommended by Anglicans who are involved in evangelism and church growth.

Faith Challenged

"For four hundred years the Bible in the Malay language has been used in this land, suddenly this year by the stroke of one pen of the government's decision, it has become illegal. The confusion has arisen further where one part of the country is allowed to use the Bible which contains the word 'Allah', while another part of the same nation cannot. The challenge is what Christians should do in such situation. Is it a good or a bad thing? There are so many suggestions since. Here are some of the reactions of Christians:

"Let us change the word 'Allah' to another word for God. Whatever word used our God is still the same."

"We should not rock the boat by going against the ban."

"Let us continue to use the Bible irrespective of the ban."

"We should not budge – stand firm and face the sword. This is a challenge of our faith."

"This is a challenge to our Scripture. No one should tell us how to write or re-write our Scripture."

"This is a warning sign from God that the Christians will need to repent and pray more."

"This is a political gimmick. Don't fall into it."

Has this affected evangelism and church attendance? Surprisingly, the reverse is true - church attendance has indeed increased. Cooperation among churches of different denominations has improved tremendously. And one thing for sure has happened – Christians are having their faith challenged.



"Church attendance has indeed increased. Cooperation among churches of different denominations has improved tremendously"

Outreach

The natives in the interior of the highlands of Malaysia, formerly shifting cultivators, have been offered 5 goats to each kampong (Malay word for village) to begin a goat rearing farming programme. The condition is to return a tenth of the sale of each goat to the church in the same kampong. Goats that

are slaughtered for food will not be considered as sale. In the beginning it is difficult for them to understand why they must give ten percent of each sale to their own church. Having taught and re-taught again and again, ten years later today, the goat farming is progressing steadily and has spread from one kampong to ten kampongs. Now there are chicken, duck, fish, vegetable, fruit, and rice farm in many different kampongs.

This is our church outreach programme to help people become self-sufficient, alongside providing education and spiritual aspects of Christian work. The ministry to these natives began only in 1995. Now there is work in about 30 kampongs throughout a large area of mountainous terrain.

Church Army — Malawi

On Sunday 28th June 2009 in St. Paul's Cathedral Blantyre, in the presence of the Bishop of Southern Malawi, Church Army Malawi was officially launched, and the first two people, Martin Mlaka and Tiyanjana Banda commissioned. The cathedral was packed for the three hour service; there were two great choirs together with a group of traditional dancers and the worship expressed the breadth of Anglicanism with incense, charismatic worship and everything in between!



Tiyanjana Banda and Martin Mlaka with Bishop James

Martin had already trained teams to take part in a church planting mission in a rural area known as Mbulumbuzi which is about an hour's drive from Blantyre. This was an area without any Christian presence and the response to the mission was exciting with a large number of people committing their lives to Christ.

The team then followed up those people and began to disciple them. It was a joy to hear that there is

now a Christian community in that area meeting regularly for worship, teaching and outreach. They have raised sufficient money to pay a Catechist and a person has recently been appointed to that position.

Martin and Tiyanjana have almost completed their first year at the Church Army training college in Nairobi. Early in their first term they both decided to opt for the urban mission course based at the satellite training base in Kibera which is one of the largest informal settlements in Africa on the edge of Nairobi. They both believe that this course will assist them in their ministry back in Malawi. Until recently Martin was working as the Diocesan Evangelism & Stewardship Coordinator. Tiyanjana also has evangelism experience working with young people. Yes commissioned prior to training! The Bishop wanted to get Church Army 'on the road'. A friend said to me, when I told him about the commissioning prior to completing all the initial training that 'we have fresh expressions of Christian community, so why not fresh expressions of Church Army.' An interesting thought which perhaps we need to explore further.

Philip Johanson - Church Army International

Church Army — Encounters on the Edge

Those of us committed to "mission in the UK" – in a post Christendom era - have a problem. The kinds of successful mission strategies adopted in the past such as town-wide missions or evangelism courses are only working for a small, ever-decreasing proportion of our society; those who have a positive church background. What is therefore being explored in many of the mainline denominations are ways to connect with unreached people by re-imagining church and starting different kinds.

The journal *Encounters on the Edge* (ISSN 1751-4355) comes from the British Isles Church Army's research unit, the Sheffield Centre. It is a key resource for those wishing to reflect more deeply on this contemporary ecclesiological exploration. Based on the research of one of the leading Anglican UK experts on church planting and fresh expressions, Revd Dr George Lings, it has provided a means of sharing stories, highlighting good practice and facilitating greater understanding and support among fellow practitioners and with their permission-givers.

Encounters on the Edge is essential reading for those who want to engage in deeper questions and key issues of this movement. It is a body of literature that offers examples of mature practice in the context of rich learning through strategic and theological reflection. The range of stories covered embodies the reality that this is a phenomenon remarkable for its diversity of outward expressions despite a growing shared wisdom about methodological process as well as a determination to remain orthodox. In an increasingly diverse western culture, this is encouraging evidence of healthy principled incarnational engagement that rightly resists 'one-size-fits all' solutions.

The Sheffield Centre continues to receive overseas mission enablers and strategists from a variety of denominations and countries who want to learn from our research to inform their own increasingly challenging mission contexts. For all in the ECGI network, these stories of practical engagement are offered as glimmers of hope that even in a tough, mission context like the UK, there are a number of encouraging examples of effective engagement with a varied range of people groups.

For information on the complete 10 year catalogue and to subscribe or purchase individual issues visit our website www.encountersontheedge.org.uk.



SUCCESSSES

The story of the Missionary venture in the Church of Nigeria began when the Bishops from Nigeria returned from the Lambeth Conference of 1988. It was at that Lambeth Conference that the Decade of Evangelism was declared. When the team returned, the Church spent as little a time as possible in theorising the issue. The then Primate, Most Rev 'Biodun Adetiloye, got the House of Bishops to accept the idea of turning the then accepted methodology of Missionary activities upside down. They agreed to consecrate and send young enterprising bishops to areas where there were either very few Churches or no church at all; and charge them with the mandate to build a Diocese there. Few shared his enthusiasm for this venture, many doubted, and a few opposed the idea completely because this went against any known principle of Church planting. However, eight areas were selected – all in the capital cities of some of the States in Nigeria and eight young Bishops were consecrated.

In three short years the stories that emerged were very exciting. All the Missionary Dioceses blossomed with very many converts won to the Lord and very many churches planted. The Church of Nigeria rejoiced. The sceptics and opposers of the scheme were won over and the Primate was exonerated. Following that experiment of eight areas, many more areas were chosen; and with the earlier ones as incentives, the Church began to really grow and blossom. By the next Lambeth Conference of 1998, the number of Bishops from Nigeria increased by nearly half as much as before. Since that time the Church of Nigeria never looked back. When the former Primate of Nigeria – Most Rev Peter Akinola - took over, everyone thought that the best action was to start consolidating and nurturing the Missionary Dioceses. That was an option open to him to take but in considering that we have over 150 million Nigerians and within that number were peoples-groups that never had the privilege of hearing the Gospel, he decided that it was not time to stop the exercise.

During the last annual Missionary Conference organised for Missionary Dioceses in November 2009, testimonies were pouring in of how faithful God had been to all the Missionary areas even with the constraints of resources, both in money and personnel. Bishop after Bishop talked of many souls being won for Christ and many congregations started. People were excitedly coming to faith and a lot of age-old non-Christian traditions and customs were being dismantled by the power of the Gospel; and people in those areas now have a feeling of total liberation. This is so much so that some communities were sending delegations asking for the Gospel to be brought to them. Within the space of one year to 2009 over three hundred and fifty churches were planted collectively by the Missionary Dioceses present at that Conference.

The blessing the Church of Nigeria has is that the well-to-do Dioceses and in some cases, individuals, are always willing to share resources with some of the Missionary Dioceses – at least for the first three years. After three years the Missionary Diocese concerned is expected to go it alone. In spreading the Gospel and planting Churches, the 'Missionary Diocese' experiment of the Church of Nigeria has worked so well that it is now the norm for Church expansion in various parts of our region.

CONCERNS

The major concern that most of the Bishops have is the dearth of trained personnel. This follows from not having enough financial resources, not just to recruit and pay as many workers as they need but also to put up structures for congregations particularly in very impoverished areas. Where there are no structures, congregations dwindle during very bad rainy seasons. This problem is highlighted more when the Missionary Diocese stops receiving any 'outside help' after three years. That is really a concern.

With the lack of trained personnel goes the issue of Church Spiritual growth. Making converts is one thing, but growing those converts is another. It now seems that the Church becomes a victim of its success. It looks as if consolidating arrangements cannot match the speed of expansion. That has led in some cases to 'mismanaged growth'.

The Church of Nigeria is already addressing these issues. During the last Bishops' annual retreat in January 2010, the Major topic discussed was Discipleship in various forms. Our prayer is that within the coming years there would be enhanced theological training programme for more Clergy, as well as Leadership training for the Laity. An Economic Empowerment Conference for all the Bishops and their Diocesan Treasurers was held by the middle of 2009; and the idea was to assist all the Dioceses in ways of being self-reliant. That conference is beginning to yield fruit.

Rt. Rev Ken Okeke Chairman, Church of Nigeria Missionary Society (CNMS)

Signs of Springtime in Canada?

For the past four years Toronto, our largest Canadian diocese, and the Wycliffe College Institute of Evangelism, have been co-sponsoring an annual Vital Church Planting conference. This conference has grown in its short history to the point at which it has been possible to "plant" a new conference, Vital Church Planting West, in Edmonton. These conferences have been able to draw people not only from across the country, but also from across the spectrum of churchmanship. It seems that in coming together to join in God's mission to the world, our differences assume a more manageable proportion, and those same differences can end up enriching one another. One Anglo Catholic priest returned to St. John's, Newfoundland, after the first of these conferences inspired to do something different, and started Saturday at St. Michael's, which as the name suggests meets on Saturdays and connects with families with young children in the area who were not connecting with the traditional Sunday morning services.

Throughout the Canadian church there is an increasing awareness of and interest in the Five Marks of Mission, with parishes, dioceses and our national church devoting time and resources to fleshing out more of what it means to be God's people in mission, in the post-Christendom, post-modern and hyper-consumerist culture that is typical of much of contemporary Canada.

God's Spirit is inspiring ordinary Christians to engage in forms of loving service, in such diverse ways as opening up a church hall in winter to give a home to a town's skateboarders in a clearly Christian context; and, starting a group in a shelter for homeless women for them to investigate Jesus, and seeing some of its members come to faith in him. Wycliffe College is starting a Pioneer Stream in its M Div. Program to train people for ministry in mission situations as opposed to situations which supposedly call for maintenance. Anglican Christians in Canada are taking a growing interest in becoming more shaped by and for God's mission in God's world, and are becoming increasingly willing to risk trying something new. That can only be a good thing!

Nick Brotherwood Montreal, Quebec

"It seems that in coming together to join in God's mission to the world, our differences assume a more manageable proportion, and those same differences can end up enriching one another."



The Archbishop of Canterbury's leadership has pointed us in England to a vision of the "mixed economy church". We aim to see traditional churches growing healthily and engaging in God's mission through their bread-and-butter work, and alongside them to see emerging congregations and fresh expressions of church, re-imagining church in a fast-changing context.

With this in mind the Archbishops' Council commissioned the Weddings Project, tasked to grow the inherited church by attracting and welcoming more

people through a church wedding.

Recent research showed that 53% of English people still believe church is the 'proper' place for a wedding. But only 22% do marry in church, and now, in late Christendom, many couples believe it would be "hypocritical" to approach the church. So the Project's task is to let people know that the church is there for them and that they are welcome, not only in the lead-up to the wedding, but also afterwards.

Changes in English law have made it easier for couples to marry in a church where they have a family or other special connection. The Weddings Project has developed a system of invitational resources and a website aimed at couples - www.yourchurchwedding.org. We are now offering this system to Church of England dioceses that wish to participate, together with our missional story based on the research we commissioned.

This explores the spiritual seriousness of people in England, their desire to approach the church for their wedding, and the reasons they feel disqualified from doing so. The work is done by a multidisciplinary national team drawn from communications, mission, family life policy, research, liturgy and ministry. Further details are available through the website above. Please pray for this work and for other initiatives designed to contribute to the mixed economy by maximising the opportunities we still have to meet our people through weddings, funerals and baptisms.

Paul Bayes, National Mission and Evangelism Adviser, Church of England

Prayer Board

SOUTH EAST ASIA

26 June - 2 July
Mission Team to Taiwan

16 - 18 September
Mission Conference
Theme: *Take to Hearts the Commands ... to the ends of the world*

25 October - 2 November
Mission Team to Bangladesh

Send your items for September & October for the next Prayer Board by 1 August

SOUTH AFRICA

14 to 16 October

Touching Heaven, Changing Earth" - Holistic Mission and Ministry for the 21st Century. Pre-Lausanne Conference from for Anglican leaders

Speakers are likely to include:

Archbishop Thabo, Tricia Neill; Canon Rosemary Mbogo; Mark & Helen Van Koevering; Robert Siaki Motu; Derek Hong; Paul Siaki; Mark Ox-brow; Mike Cassidy; Blair Carlson

DR CONGO

June

Evangelism amongst street children, taxi men, prisoners and disabled people



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*O gracious and holy Father,
give us the wisdom to perceive you,
diligence to seek you,
patience to wait upon you,
eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate upon you,
a life to proclaim you.
through the power of the Spirit
of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Benedict of Nursia

Get Involved

- ◆ **Register**, if you have not already done so, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi> — we will let the core group person responsible for your region know about you;
- ◆ **Tell others** involved in evangelism and church growth about the Initiative and newsletter
- ◆ **Send us** your stories, of how God is working through your church or organisation to grow his church, to include in future issues, (300—500 words) by 1 August for September edition. We are exploring how we can include more sensitive material on secure web pages;
- ◆ **Tell us** about resources: books; websites; courses, good practice; prayers etc that we can include in future newsletters or on the website
- ◆ **Read the website** to explore the resources; that are already included;
- ◆ **Translate** this newsletter, and other material, into the languages of those who cannot read in English; at this stage we do not have the resources to do this ourselves.
- ◆ We call on you to **pray** for the ECGI and the work mentioned in this issue.