

International Anglican Family Network: Report to ACC17

1. Through its newsletters, a regional consultation in October 2018, social media and other activities, the International Anglican Family Network (IAFN) has continued to celebrate the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation and advocate for the family in the face of behaviours which diminish this potential, sharing stories of hope, promoting family care and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity.

Regional Consultation for Central Africa

2. Thirty participants, one woman and one man from each of the dioceses of the Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA), gathered at Nomad's Court, Lusaka, Zambia in October 2018, for a consultation entitled 'Families under pressure: How can churches respond?' In addition, 26 youth participants from the Diocese of Lusaka joined for one day for a specifically focused youth consultation held at the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Lusaka.
3. The participants were supported by the consultation planning team comprising Canon Robert Sihubwa, CPCA's Provincial Youth Coordinator, Victoria Mwewa, Diocese of Lusaka, Bishop David Rosedale, IAFN Chair, Revd Angela Morrison, IAFN Coordinator, Revd Canon Terrie Robinson, Director for Women in Church & Society, and Revd Canon John Kafwanka, Director for Mission at the Anglican Communion Office.
4. Participants were asked to undertake some preparatory work to assist the planning group in developing the themes for the consultation. A programme was designed that would meet objectives and allow for flexibility as participants shared stories from their own contexts. Local speakers brought particular expertise and knowledge relating to the experience of families in the region, the challenges faced by them, and existing effective ministries to support families. The topics considered included changing economic demands on the family; parenting in an era of working parents; lone parenting; child-headed families; exploring and responding to increased divorce rates; young people in the family; and, families in the era of technology.
5. These last two topics formed the focus for the youth consultation day. As adults and youth listened to one another and spoke about the pressures experienced by them, it became clear that the global technological revolution is presenting some unique challenges for families and for the church as family. Neo Veronica Tsietso from the Diocese of Botswana said afterwards, "To me, the conference was about knowing that technology is an empowerment from God. We need to use it wisely and fruitfully as it is part of God's plan." Her words echo the important shift that took place in the understanding and attitudes of many participants. The inbuilt flexibility of the programme allowed for this theme to be explored further over the remaining days, alongside others, recognising that approaches to responding to the variety of pressures experienced by families would mean embracing both technology and those most adept at its handling – that is, our young ones.
6. The broad aims of the consultation were to:
 - pray and to reflect together on biblical and theological material relating to family and family well-being
 - share information about pressures on families in contemporary urban and rural settings
 - gather positive Anglican experiences of responding to challenges faced by families under pressure
 - consider how Anglican churches might enhance their efforts to support families in their ability to survive and thrive in rural areas and cities

- progressively promote the establishment and embedding of Family Life ministry in the Province and dioceses.
7. The enthusiasm of the participants for the concept of IAFN was a key feature of the consultation. Connections developed quickly among the participants and they formed a provincial network, appointed a young couple from Zimbabwe as provincial representatives for the network, and set up a WhatsApp group. One of the provincial representatives will participate in ACC17 to represent both IAFN and the experience and learnings of the new CPCA network.
 8. The participants wished to share the learning and conclusions of their time together with the rest of the Anglican Communion:
 - **The need for an inclusive approach to supporting those families who may be fragile and in need:** We need to bring about awareness and encourage our churches to see and respond to the pressures around and upon families.
 - **The need to have Family Advocates at every level of church life:** 'Family' is both precious in itself and also as a dynamic resource for unfolding the Gospel, and should be restored to our mission narratives.
 - **The need to embrace young people and the advances of technology in the life of the church:** Empowering the youth empowers the church. Rather than expecting young people to take forward what their elders have established and maintained, they need to be acknowledged as potential agents of mission and positive change, and their contributions recognised within the church. This includes their status as 'digital natives', that is, people who have been born in the technological era, and their ability to lead into the future.
 9. These conclusions will form the substance of a draft resolution that IAFN will take to the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Hong Kong in May 2019 (ACC17).
 10. A report of the consultation, in the form of an IAFN newsletter, includes reflections from many of its participants on particular aspects of family ministries. It can be read on-line at <https://iafn.anglicancommunion.org/consultations.aspx>.
 11. The IAFN regional consultation for Central Africa represented a model of the collaboration requested by the Anglican Consultative Council in resolution 16.06:

The Anglican Consultative Council calls on the Provinces to further support IAFN as it continues and develops this work by encouraging their churches to share stories of their ministry to:

- safeguard children's identity, dignity and security through practical means such as birth registration and in responding to the abuse of trafficking and any other form of exploitation.
- strengthen the family as a foundation for human flourishing and to build up resilience to cope with change and challenge.
- work for reconciliation and justice in the home and the community.

IAFN Newsletters

12. IAFN newsletters have continued to highlight mission and ministry among families and enable networking through the sharing of experience and good news.
13. The March 2019 edition 'Families under pressure: How can churches respond?' shares stories from the dioceses of Central Africa about personal transformation, work among street children and with orphans, approaches to gender justice, and initiatives to tackle poverty in families. An article edited by the IAFN Coordinator outlining the processes undertaken to plan and host a consultation, is offered to support and empower those interested in hosting local gatherings of their own. The contents of the newsletter are drawn together in the editorial written by Bishop David Rosedale, IAFN Chair, who reminds of the dynamic nature of family, crucially highlighting the challenges that families face in understanding the 'inversion of power' brought about through the technological revolution alongside the inversion of power that is the essence of God's love.

14. The June 2018 edition '[Abundant Life for All Children](#)', was a contribution to the World Council of Churches 'Child-friendly Churches' initiative and the associated '[Churches' Commitments to Children](#)', and also the international faith-based campaign to [end violence against children](#) initiated by World Vision and taken up by a growing number of faith-based organisations and institutions. This newsletter included stories from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, reflecting on a range of ministry designed to support hard-to-reach families and children; the Diocese of Connor in Northern Ireland, where the church partners with organisations specifically supporting children at risk of exclusion from school, and new, young mothers; 13-year old Nosipho from South Africa on the experiences of being a Green Anglican; the Diocese of Accra in Ghana about their anti-human trafficking work which includes both educating leaders and rehabilitating victims; the Anglican Church in El Salvador, supporting families experiencing gang crime, and the Diocese of Peshawar in Pakistan working to improve the quality of life for children with disabilities and their families.
15. Other newsletters published since ACC-16 include [Promoting Health in Families](#) which shared stories from Anglicans around the world who, often in partnership with others, are working among families and in their communities to increase health and wellbeing as part of the Church's holistic ministry, and showed how working for health and wholeness is shaped by local circumstances and contexts, and [A Youthful Church](#), which told stories from many different parts of the Communion about work being done to include children and young people in the life of Anglican churches and to assist them in exploring their own faith and spirituality, and to support children and young people who struggle with pressures such as abuse and family breakdown, or who simply need to be able to get to school.
16. ACC members wishing to receive IAFN newsletters electronically or in paper form should please write to iafn@anglicancommunion.org.

IAFN on-line

17. We continue to develop our on-line presence, publishing our newsletters on our [website](#) and sharing the individual stories and other news and information on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Our readership of both online and printed material continues to grow.
18. Material has been added to the 'Consultations' section of our website which we hope will inform local initiatives to host consultations.
19. Harnessing the skills of young people to share their own stories and experiences is an area of development for IAFN. We are happy to report that our latest newsletter, following the consultation for Central Africa, includes stories written by youth participants. We hope to explore the use of video technology for sharing stories on-line, while remaining vigilant in matters of safeguarding.