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## **Summary**

The Episcopal Accompaniment Programme involves working with small groups of bishops within a province to support them in reflecting upon and re-evaluating their leadership styles, aims and objectives. It is a methodology rooted in a theology of Companionship, of "walking together". It seeks to be more than either mentoring or training, rooted in trust, acceptance and mutual encouragement. This evaluation document, based on survey (n 18) and interview data (n 14), reviews the successes and challenges of the process and makes recommendations for improvement. We hope that this evaluation can act as a useful resource to inform the planning of future leadership support programmes, particularly in the area of episcopal ministry. This learning will be shared at a round table with other organisations involved in a similar process during the last quarter of 2017.

Overall, the evaluation results were extremely positive with the majority of Bishops who responded highlighting both a positive experience and changes that they have made as a result. The most strongly articulated narratives within the evaluative feedback are summarized as follows:

- The Accompaniment process was valuable as a time and space away from daily stresses to reconnect with oneself, others and God.
- The most commonly articulated memory of the process was that it offered the opportunity for bishops to recognise that the stresses and challenges they face in their ministry are shared by all in Episcopal office.
- Episcopal Accompaniment offered tools and models through which bishops could re-consider and re-imagine their leadership styles and roles.
- As a result of the reflective practices offered within the process, bishops felt that they were becoming 'better at delegating responsibilities', 'better listener[s]' and that they were experiencing an 'expansion of vision and scope as a Bishop.' Other significant changes include 86.87% of Bishops reporting a change in their ways of handling stress and 73.33% reporting significant changes in their ways of handling conflict, in their leadership styles and in their communication with other Bishops in the province.

The responses unanimously highlighted the value of the process for other bishops and the need for this or a similar process to be available more widely for those in episcopal ministry and for clergy.

Recommendations from this evaluation relate to the three areas of: Communion wide support for bishops; Accompaniment process, internal learning for USPG. These are summarised as follows:

### **Strategic Recommendations: Communion Wide**

#### ***1. New Bishops' Training***

Globally, more emphasis needs to be placed on support for new bishops, particularly in the area of on-going mentoring. The integration of Episcopal Accompaniment with other support providers will help to generate a more strategic, Communion-wide approach.

**2. Strategic Review of Current Provision for Bishops**

There is a need for a more detailed piece of research that maps out training/mentoring/pastoral programmes offered to bishops. Vacuums in terms of episcopal support (by geography or type of provision) can be identified.

**3. Needs Assessment for Bishops**

This evaluative review has generated an informal 'needs assessment' of participating bishops. It is recommended that this be developed and used to evaluate whether the training and support available are meeting the articulated needs of bishops.

**Accompaniment Process Recommendations****4. Follow Up with Participants**

Follow up between participants needs actively to be encouraged in order to sustain the trust built up in the process. Process content needs to include planning together how to maintain communication and momentum once the process is over.

**5. Resources and Manuals**

It is recommended that current facilitators jointly compile a list of key resources and tools which are available online under different topic headings to act as a store for future Accompaniment facilitators to draw from and add to.

**6. Facilitator's Contextual Knowledge.**

It is recommended that the facilitator be skilled in cross-cultural working, and should have at least one conversation with the Archbishop of the province before the first Accompaniment and one conversation for every subsequent Accompaniment to keep them apprised of any issues within the province that might be impacting on the lives and ministries of bishops.

**7. Content Design**

The different learning styles of participants and the balance between content *training* materials and *reflective* processes need to be considered by the facilitator in the planning of the Accompaniment process.

**8. Diversity of Participant Selection**

Within any one Accompaniment group, a broad range of episcopal experiences should be included – in terms of geography, gender and length of time in episcopal ministry.

## **Recommendations for USPG**

### **9. *Strengthening Strategic Understanding***

It is recommended that USPG understand both the theology and the value of the Episcopal Accompaniment process in relation to the achievement of their strategic plans and goals.

### **10. *Strategic Learning***

It is recommended that USPG design a more systematic, longitudinal monitoring process so that the long term impact of the Accompaniment process can be better understood. Such data need to be shared with others to ensure that there is an on-going, strategic and responsive dialogue around episcopal support at Communion level.

## **Introduction**

The Episcopal Accompaniment Programme is an aspect of USPG's leadership development work and a key part of USPG's strategy, contributing directly to the priority of 'leadership and accompaniment.' The Episcopal Accompaniment process follows from USPG's theory of change: 'rooted in Anglican Communion & structures; inspired by the gospel, seeking to be the hands and feet of Christ' and working 'through relationships with shared learning.' It encourages effective leadership within the Anglican Communion and demonstrates how a relationship-centered approach can result in 'an active church, with an enlivened faith, effective leadership and contextualised theology.' (USPG Draft Strategy, 2017).

The Episcopal Accompaniment process involves working with small groups of bishops within a province to support them in reflecting upon and re-evaluating their leadership styles, aims and objectives. This work has been predominantly undertaken by Canon Edgar Ruddock, who has worked with the Anglican Church of the Indian Ocean (ACIO) with the full House of Bishops, and with gatherings of smaller groups of bishops in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) and with bishops in Pakistan and Central Africa. Edgar has been developing an Episcopal Accompaniment model within USPG since 2012. Similar processes have also been facilitated by Bishop Brian Castle in Zimbabwe and Bishop David Hamid in Brazil.

The Episcopal Accompaniment programme has been running since 2012. Whilst monitoring data has been gathered periodically, this is the first systematic evaluation of this process. This evaluation seeks to address the following aims:

- 1) To assess whether the "offer" of Accompaniment by USPG has met an identifiable series of needs.
- 2) To assess the positives and negatives of the experience of participants and to capture, and learn from, their reflections on its impact on their lives and ministries.
- 3) To capture sufficient data to facilitate and fund a dialogue with others engaged in supporting episcopal ministry, with a view to exploring future, and possibly shared, strategic developments.

The evaluation measures the impact that the Episcopal Accompaniment process has had on the bishops who have experienced it to determine the value of the programme and where the format and design could be modified to enhance its benefits. This evaluation document reviews the successes and challenges of the Episcopal Accompaniment process as well as the outcomes for both church and individual. It then identifies the implications of the findings and makes recommendations for strategic planning around such processes and for other organisations engaged in such work.

### **The Development of Episcopal Accompaniment**

Episcopal Accompaniment grew out of a recognition on the part of USPG staff and principally its former Director of International Relations, Edgar Ruddock, as to the isolation and frustration that many leaders around the Anglican Communion were struggling with. Listening to the experiences of bishops revealed a cohort challenged by the negatives of hierarchy and the stranglehold that the hierarchical system often has on episcopal life and ministry, forcing people into narrow defiles from

which there is often no perceived way out and drawing people into dynamics that are unhealthy including preoccupations with power, status and access to resources. Many bishops felt ill equipped and unsupported to do the jobs to which they had been appointed, blocked by systems and institutional constraints and some ended up feeling overwhelmed and demoralised because of this. The aim of Episcopal Accompaniment was to respond to this challenge, cognisant that blockages in the leadership system prevent the transformation and healing of communities that USPG supports in all of its work.

The Episcopal Accompaniment Process has the following aims:

- 1) To offer a confidential, supportive space for bishops to explore, assess and re-focus their episcopal ministries, for their own benefit, and for the building of the church in the service of God's Kingdom.
- 2) To do this in a way which enables them to discern more clearly the journey that has brought them to this point in their lives, to explore their present context and challenges, and to do this with a view to re-evaluating their leadership styles, aims and objectives.
- 3) To do this in the light of personal, familial, ecclesial and cultural contexts, learning from one another in a caring environment, rooted in a framework of prayer, bible study and worship.

Since the first Episcopal Accompaniment process in 2012, two types of process have emerged as a way of offering support to bishops. One is a retreat type process, involving small groups of bishops from across a province where the focus is on one's own role as a bishop and how that role can develop and grow. This model has been used in one off processes with groups in Central Africa, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Brazil and annually with different groups of bishops from Southern Africa in 2014, 2015 and 2016. The other type of accompaniment has comprised a more systematic piece of work with the whole House of Bishops within a province to help to facilitate communication across a group in which there are relational challenges and conflict. This more sustained model has involved a facilitator working with the House of Bishops in an accompaniment role on 6 occasions between 2013 and 2016. The meetings have often been held before or after House of Bishops meetings and have taken slightly different forms and foci over the years. Two of the meetings have included spouses. A further Accompaniment meeting with the House of Bishops is planned for August 2017.

The aims of both of these models are to get bishops together *away* from agendas, schedules and the context of being led by another bishop; to flatten the hierarchies and to place these bishops together as peers and individuals, without the pressures of hierarchy and role, challenging socio-political situations and cultural expectations around what it is to be a leader. In both models, the accompanier - an outside facilitator offering a mediating presence - has been in a quasi chaplaincy role in relation to the group of bishops.

The content and shape of the smaller 'retreat type' processes themselves depend very much on the facilitator, but there is a set of exercises that have been used across many of the accompaniments and these exercises seek to locate individual bishops within the contexts of their own histories, starting with their childhoods, retracing their vocations and spiritual journeys and placing these

histories within the contexts and communities in which they find themselves before looking at where they want to see change and how they would like to develop as leaders.

### Example of an Episcopal Accompaniment programme

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
		<i>The One who was</i>	<i>The One who is</i>	<i>The One who is to come</i>	
Worship		Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	Final Eucharist
Breakfast					
Session 1		Who are we?	a) Our current contexts b) Nature of Community	Conversations for change	Conclusions and Departures
Coffee					
Session 2		Where have we come from?	a) Bible Study - Mark 6 b) Dynamics of Community	a) Bible Study - Rev 21 b) nature of Episcopé	
Lunch					
Break					
Session 3		Exploring our timelines	Pairs work - our issues	Missional leadership	
Tea	Arrivals				
Session 4		What is vocation?	Leadership inward and outward	The Labyrinth	
Break					
Supper					
Session 5	Welcome and Context	Bible Study: Our Ps 139	Managing our personal lives and busyness	Reflection and evaluation	
Night Prayer					
				Jabula	

Some of the exercises used within this outline were directly mentioned in the evaluative feedback due to the significant impact that they had had on the on-going thinking and reflection of bishops as they moved back into their ordinary lives and routines. As well as offering ways of enabling leaders to reflect on their leadership practice, the Episcopal Accompaniment process has generated a useful mapping of the challenges and issues that many bishops face and which contribute to the stress of the role. Any Communion wide/USPG based development of provision in this area could usefully build on the evidence that the process has generated about the challenges that bishops are facing. An example from one of the process exercises, built by the bishops and offering an insight is given below:



OUR	EPISCOPAL	OVERSIGHT
Joys	Options for change	Struggles
Family support - spouses This recognised in diocese Feeling this is where God wants me Privilege of EP Ministry Sense of awe in simple ministry Value of EP colleagues for support Support of clergy and laity Embracing gifts of laity Engagement with secular governance/community Being able to come alongside others Delegation through portfolios Seeing people growing in vocation Core function of teaching the faith asset based development Umoja Our Anglican ethos, structures etc Exposure to the Communion Shared episcopal leadership		Working spouse pressures Isolation of spouses Role of "Bishop husband" Career opportunism Unmanageable clergy! Convoluted processes of appointments Shortage of quality clergy The burden of trust building Unpicking nastiness Church politics - hidden agendas Shared episcopal leadership Personality clashes Tradition can block transformation Low sense of vocation/sacrifice Culture of entitlement Lack of resources for ministry Discipline and mercy

The shape of this evaluation and the areas of focus for both questionnaires and interviews were informed by monitoring and interim evaluative data that many of the participants from Africa and the Indian Ocean contributed at the end of the Accompaniment or in the months following. The data gathered through these exercises indicate quite clearly that Episcopal Accompaniment had an impact in three areas:

### 1) Leadership strengthening

Monitoring data suggested that leadership strengthening was taking place in a number of ways. Common articulations are summarised as follows:

- Learning from each other
- Creating a supportive peer group to help each other tackle local challenges

- Reflecting and engaging with questions about how power and authority can be better handled in relation to/in spite of cultural expectations. The tension was commonly articulated as one of ‘discipline’ vs ‘mercy’. The issue of ‘servant leadership’ was commonly raised as a counter model around which episcopal practice should be based.
- Expanded vision/exposure to other contexts and cultural styles (including through the style of an outside facilitator)
- Building confidence to *listen* in difficult/conflict situations rather than to react

## 2) Psychosocial Support

The monitoring data suggested that one of the most significant things that the Accompaniment provided was psychosocial support for a cohort of people who frequently felt isolated and under pressure in their leadership roles. The accompaniment was reported as:

- Helping bishops to deal with isolation by generating solidarity through peer networks
- Enabling bishops to realise that their pastoral challenges are not theirs alone but are shared by others in different contexts
- Modelling ways of deepening sharing and engagement with each other and with their colleagues
- Providing mutual encouragement

## 3) Mentoring/mediating

Monitoring data emphasised the critical value of the presence of an *external* facilitator – someone culturally, contextually and geographically ‘other’ whilst also being cross culturally literate – to enable:

- Deep sharing of often difficult things with other participants to improve understanding and develop trust between colleagues
- Moving away from local tensions/pressures/narratives to think about shared challenges by bringing in the ‘elsewhere’ or a ‘third space’
- Exposure to new ways of thinking about ministry and role

The evaluation based its areas of enquiry around these intersecting themes to: deepen understanding of the ways in which the process impacted in these areas; better understand the implications of these impacts for the longer term behaviour and perceptions of bishops who went through the process; explore other outcomes – positive and negative; capture ways in which the process can be developed/enhanced and the desire for this amongst process participants.

## **Methodology**

To date 54 Bishops have taken part in the Episcopal Accompaniment process. Survey questionnaires allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analyses were sent to all 54 Bishops via *Survey Monkey*. 18 Bishops responded, 2 from South America and 16 from Africa giving a total response rate of 33.33%. The quantitative data were then analysed using *Survey Monkey* and the qualitative data were analysed by two USPG members of staff with responsibility for monitoring, evaluation, research and learning. For the qualitative responses in the survey, *Wordles* were used to identify and display words that appear most frequently in the text.

In anticipation of the desire for more in-depth information and a deeper probing in relation to experiences of the programme, semi-structured interviews were arranged with a sample 50% of the bishops. The sample sought to include 50% of bishops who had attended a particular Accompaniment, and within that group selection was stratified by nationality, language and length of time in episcopal ministry by consecration to provide as balanced a range of experiences as possible. Due to the time constraints of interviewers, four interviewers were used, two of whom had previously been involved in Episcopal Accompaniment as process facilitators. However, no facilitator interviewed any bishop who had participated in an Accompaniment process that they had led. Each interviewer was given a set of interview cues to follow as well as a recording format to create as much consistency as possible in the data collection and recording process. All 14 interviews were conducted via Skype. They were carefully coded to enable the identification of key themes and outcomes.

The data received from some of the interviews were not as in-depth as had been hoped for and the reporting format, which had been requested to create coherence, did not work for many interviewers as it was too complicated. Retrospectively, a preparation day with all four interviewers and a piloting of the interview cues and reporting pro-forma would likely have been beneficial to the process.

All those who had been involved in Episcopal Accompaniment as facilitators were also contacted to request an interview to provide detail on the preparation, facilitation and follow up of their work with the bishops. Unfortunately, only one facilitator responded and was interviewed. However, interviews with the two other facilitators will be sought to inform USPG's plans for the development of work in this area, in response to this evaluation.

## Results and Analysis

The results of the survey and interviews reiterate the critical value of the programme (as suggested by monitoring data) in the areas of leadership training, psychosocial support and peer mentoring. A collective analysis of the data – both quantitative and qualitative - shows that the Episcopal Accompaniment process serves to draw people out of what was described as the ‘loneliness’ of being a bishop, in which, for some, other bishops are seen as ‘rivals’ or ‘competitors’, and back into relationship<sup>1</sup>. This reconnection is narrated as happening in three identified areas:

- Reconnection with self - through exercises that help to facilitate a bishop’s connection with their own life histories and spiritual journeys, and seeing themselves refracted through Bible studies and the perceptions of and relationships with their peers.
- Reconnection with peers (fellow bishops) through a time of sharing ‘as human beings’ rather than as subjects set within a hierarchy and an institution
- Reconnection with God.

Most bishops reported the distinctiveness of the Accompaniment meetings not having a ‘business agenda’. The critical offerings on the part of the process of *time* and *space* to ‘be ourselves, not pretend and share our joys and our pains’ (Interview 9) allows for a (re)personalisation, of bishops to themselves and, more importantly, to each other. It is in the deeper sharing that this personal encounter with colleagues enables bishops to see themselves as connected to and like their fellow bishops: ‘I remember the closeness and open sharing we had together. Some of the things we shared were things close to us which for personally I would probably not have easily share[d] in the house of bishops – but we had time to soul search and bring up this about ourselves’ (Survey data 4)

**When you think back to the period of episcopal accompaniment you experienced, what are the first thoughts that come to your mind?**

‘The joy of brotherhood, coming together and be able to share our stories, to support one another, to cry sometimes and to laugh together.’ (Survey data 3)

‘Empowering, importance of periodic examination & assessment of oneself & your ministry, openness, spirituality, importance of the others’ spirituality’ (Survey data 5)

The identification with others, critical to seeing fellow bishops as peers rather than rivals, is evident in both survey and interview data and expressed in various ways. In response to the first survey question in bold above, the qualitative data emphasise: support; refreshment; deepening friendship; an ‘unburdening’ and a recognition that others are struggling with the same ‘burdens’; a sense of deep sharing and opening up that would not have been able to happen within House of Bishops

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that many bishops also described relationships between their diocesan clergy as rivalrous and competitive, with some adding that they (clergy) are ‘worse than the bishops’. This rivalrous, competitive behaviour needs to be handled at all levels of formation/leadership development.

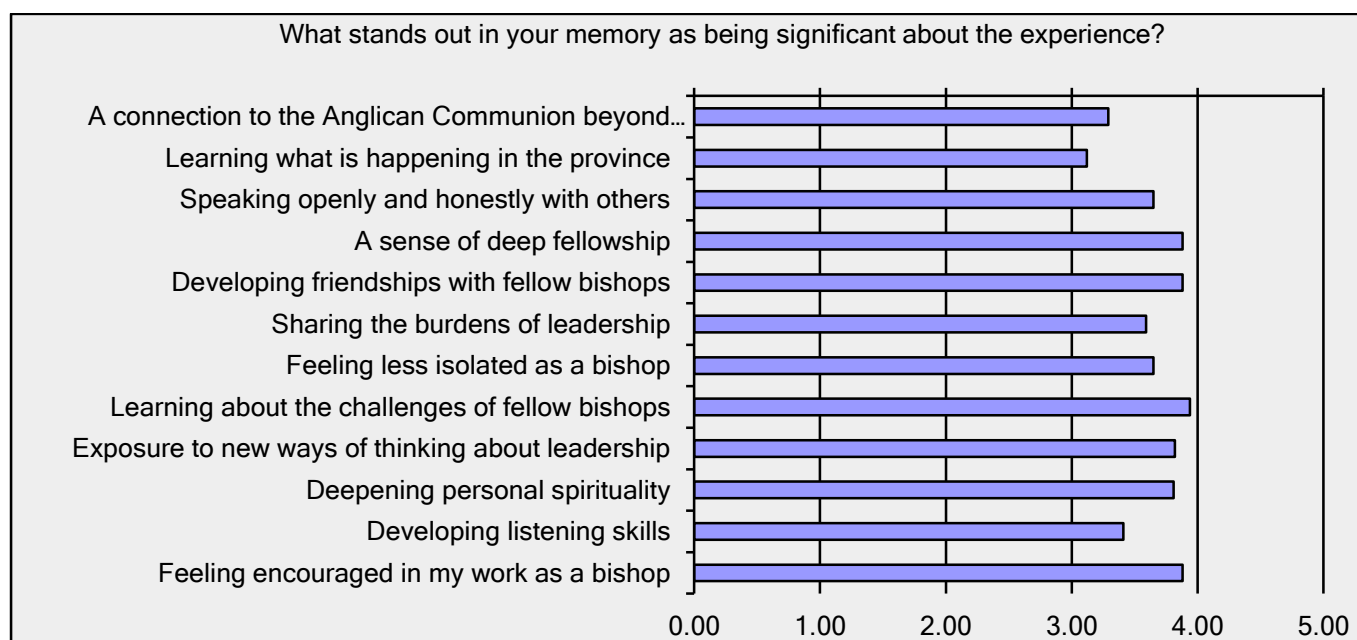
meetings or other business gatherings. Of the 18 responses, a word cloud summarises the 10 most frequently used words in response to this question as follows:



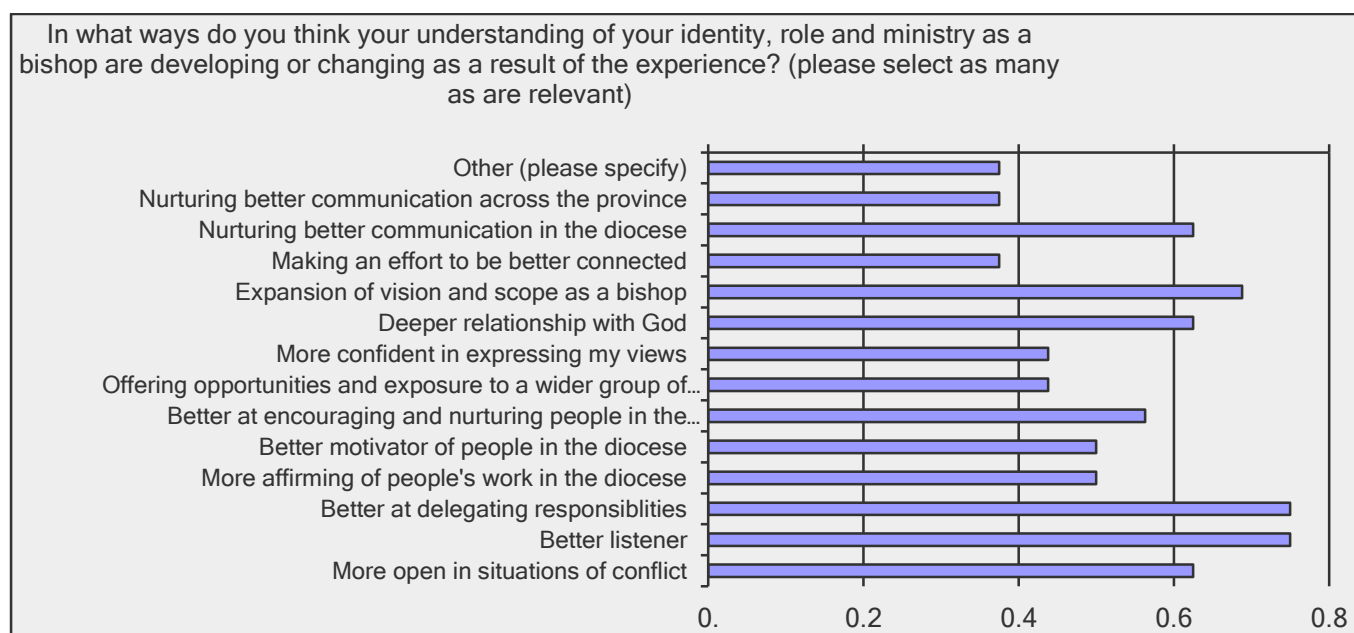
These sentiments are mirrored in the interview data where participants talk about the ‘sharing of personal stories’ and small details that enabled a deeper connection beyond participants who were able to see each other as human beings and discover that ‘despite differences’ there was a ‘common call and same aspirations’ (Interview 1). There is also some evidence that this sense of deepening relationship between colleagues through the ‘sharing of small things’ (Interview 2) in the Episcopal Accompaniment was experienced in subsequent meetings between participants, suggesting that for some, the benefits of deepening relationship persist beyond the process meeting itself. Aside from the sharing of personal stories and vulnerabilities, another significant ‘lightening of the load’ (Survey data 1) for participants came through the recognition that ‘pains and joys as a bishop are not unique but others have them too’ (Survey data 2). This aspect of shared burden was clearly very important in terms of enabling bishops to identify with each other and to generate solidarity. The open expression of the struggles which people faced – both a reflection of the trust generated by the group process and also a key method for developing that trust - was critical to enabling participants to see each other as peers and not competitors. One bishop stated that what was most helpful about the process was the ‘honest realising that others – especially those who seem to be doing so well – do struggle’ (Interview 3). It is this implicit flattening of often internalised hierarchies of difference between members of a House of Bishops that comes across in the data, and appears to impact beneficially on an individual’s positive re-evaluation of his or her own ministry. More research needs to be done to understand in depth what it is that the data suggest – that recognising that other bishops are struggling has a positive impact on the esteem of the individual bishop who is able to re-evaluate his or her own performance. Within the process, this re-evaluation is able to

happen *not* in relation to unrealistic ideals, but in relation to the experiences of their peers, who are also mired in the complexities of negotiating their difficult role in the everyday messiness of their daily contexts. This recognition and re-scaling of expectations about individual performance appears to be central to the means by which ‘loads are lightened’ and bishops are ‘unburdened’ within this process.

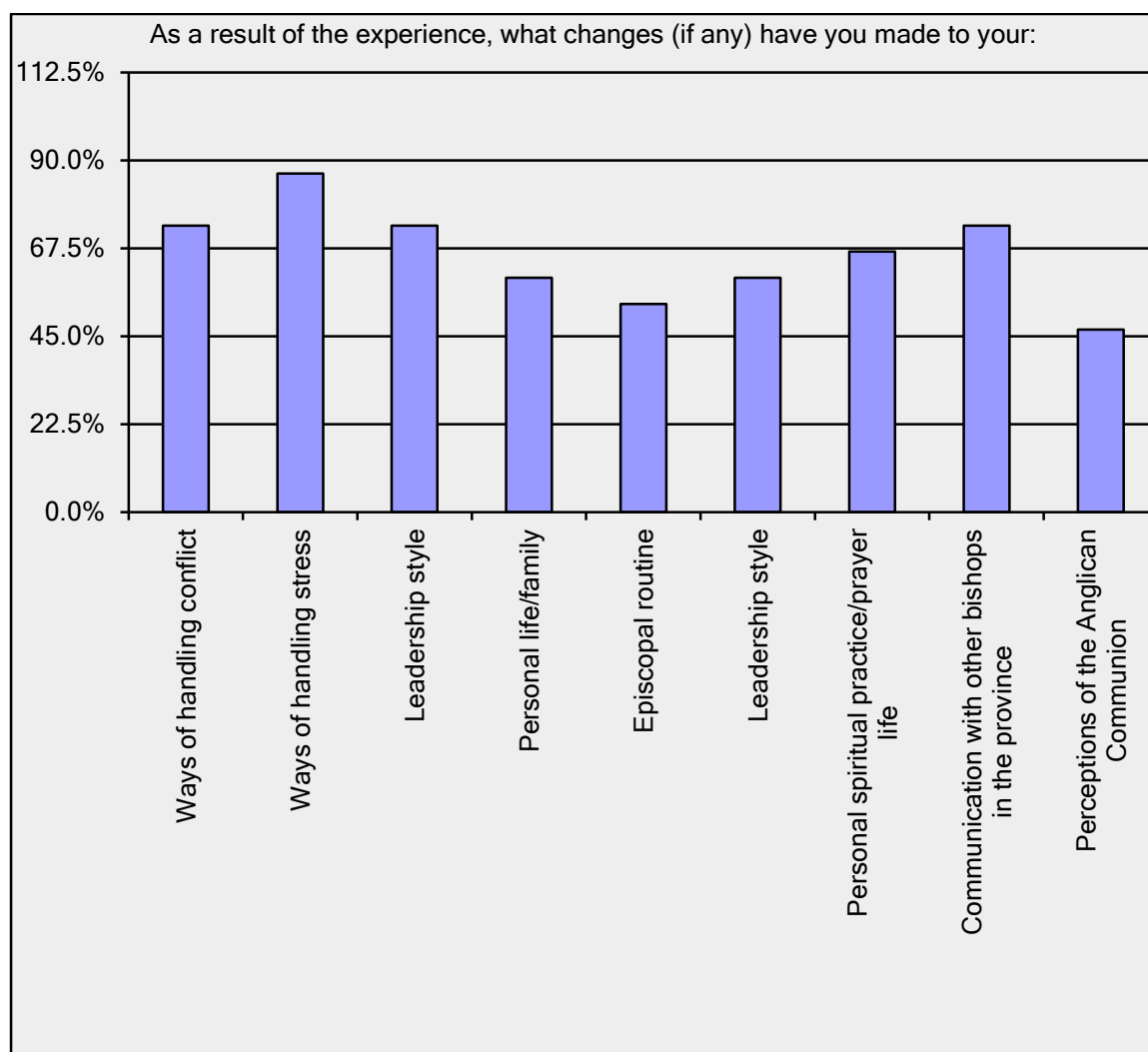
The survey data further support this hypothesis. When asked what stands out in the participant’s memory as being most significant about their experience of Episcopal Accompaniment, the most strongly weighted response is: ‘learning about the challenges of fellow bishops’. This is followed by evidence for other themes mentioned above: ‘a deep sense of fellowship,’ and ‘developing friendships with fellow bishops’. These results support what the interview data suggest; that bishops feel that it is beneficial knowing that everyone is experiencing challenges and that there is support to be found in the solidarity of sharing and reflecting together. Connected to this is another significant theme reflected in the survey response above and running throughout the data - of Episcopal Accompaniment being a source of ‘encouragement’ for bishops.



Whilst the evidence in relation to the process being ‘refreshing’ and ‘encouraging’ for bishops is strong, we were keen to explore whether and where bishops were seeking to develop their understanding and practice as leaders in specific areas. These data are very difficult to interpret, given the perennial challenge within this type of process in understanding how a discrete gathering continues to impact on an individual once they are returned to the various challenges of their context. However, we asked two questions that sought to prompt reflection in this area. The first concerned how bishops thought that their understanding of their identity, role and ministry as a Bishop [were] developing or changing as a result of the experience. The two answers most commonly given in the survey data were ‘better at delegating responsibilities’ and ‘better listener.’



Interestingly, the matter of 'delegation' was very strongly articulated within the interview data too (where there were no given categories for response), with a number of bishops recognising that there were times since their experience of Episcopal Accompaniment when they found themselves asking: 'do I actually need to do anything here?' (Interview 3) and implying that they had become better delegators of responsibilities. When analysed together, the data indicate that a typical response to the stress of being a bishop is that of adopting a more authoritarian, 'dictatorial' style of leadership. Both the interviews and the survey data revealed an awareness of the ways in which stress influenced the ways that bishops moved between what they referred to as 'dictatorial' and 'democratic' styles of leadership. Within the survey, this emerged in response to the question below which offered space for qualitative responses in relation to each area of enquiry. The qualitative responses are considered below:



As can be seen above, this question accidentally asked about changes to leadership style twice – inadvertently emphasising this area for respondents and providing more space for leadership related reflections. Two respondents recognised that this was a repeated category and noted this. 11 people responded qualitatively to the first request, 9 to the second request. From the time stamps it appears that 4 people responded to both categories on leadership with slightly different information, all of which proved complementary. Overall, asking the question twice actually meant that more people in real terms responded to the question (14 out of 18) and we generated more information in relation to leadership that we did in any other category. The emphasis here was on ‘democratic’ leadership as noted above and around the ‘delegation of responsibilities’. Where the word democratic was not used, respondents talked about being ‘open to share leadership with others’ (Survey 1), ‘Leading by example’ (Survey 2), ‘being a better listener’ (Survey 3) and ‘encouraging everyone to share different views’ (Survey 4). Other commonly used terms included: ‘collective’, ‘consultative’ and ‘participatory’, indicating a shift towards less autocratic leadership styles. The interviews note in more detail the challenges of this shift, and some respondents note challenges of trying to ‘combine’ both styles and naturally reverting to more autocratic styles at times. How much these shifts are intentional responses to the experiences of Episcopal Accompaniment cannot be measured, but that there is a reflective and engaged process going on amongst participants in relation to their leadership style is clear from the data.



Related to this, 13 survey respondents indicated that they were changing the way that they handled stress<sup>2</sup>. Changes to ways of handling stress were primarily based around physically and mentally moving away from the sites of stress. They included 'rest', 'pray', 'relax', 'meditate', 'go to gym', 'free time', 'time for family', 'getting away from office' and 'taking walks'. The theme of stress ran through much of the feedback. Bishops clearly appreciated and articulated the significance of the time to be away from normal 'stresses' in a space that enabled them to be 'refreshed', 'encouraged' and 'revived'. In itself then, the process models a good stress response with its emphasis on 'getting away from business agendas' to enable personal reconnections with self and colleagues. For those whose Accompaniments included specific content on leadership styles, Episcopal Accompaniment is being narrated within the data as having provided a space to reflect on leadership styles *and* recognise that there are ways of leading that can actively help to reduce their stress. The points above about delegation, democratic leadership styles and the recognition that other people are available to help to share some of the responsibilities and burdens of leadership support this.

12 survey respondents suggested that since Episcopal Accompaniment they had *tried* to improve communication with other bishops in the province, through a better and faster response to emails, use of *Whatsapp* and by more regularly attending provincial meetings. The challenges of internet data costs and of time were noted. One interviewee, in suggesting that communication had improved, stated that as a result of Episcopal Accompaniment s/he had 'learnt that consulting with other bishops is not a sign of weakness' (Interview 4).

The responses to changes in 'ways of handling conflict' which generated 12 survey responses bring us to a final theme in the data. The emphasis in all of the responses here is on: 'listening' (Survey data 1), 'being slower to action' (Survey data 2), 'being more open' (Survey data 3), 'allowing divergent views to be aired' (Survey data 4), 'giving people who do not agree with me a chance' (Survey data 5). If we return to the idea of Episcopal Accompaniment as offering a model for new kinds of engagement, then the area of encounters between individuals in situations of tension and conflict is certainly one in which the presence of a facilitator appears to create the kind of safe space in which people can not only begin to trust each other, but to learn from the kinds of encounter that are modelled through the Accompaniment process. Here it is worth noting that some of the participants were drawn into the sustained Episcopal Accompaniment process (see pp. 4 - 5) because of breakdowns in communication amongst members of the House of Bishops and considerable tensions within the group. Therefore, we would expect to see a proportion of the data pertaining to issues of group tension/conflict from respondents who experienced this type of process. Nevertheless, this re-personalising of group members to each other and to themselves, the deep sharing that has happened in many of the process meetings, the trust that has been generated within the meetings and the modelling and exploration of different kinds of leadership and engagement with each other appear to have affected the ways that some bishops respond to others in ways that emphasise greater openness and a 'tolerance' for other perspectives.

Even if at a very localised scale, Episcopal Accompaniment appears to be having an on-going impact in diocesan life and in the individual encounters between bishops and those to whom they are

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<sup>2</sup> With the exception of 'leadership style' which due to its being asked twice generated 14 responses (see above), the category of handling stress received the most attention.

ministering. Out of the context in which communication had been very strained amongst the House of Bishops, one respondent talked of the biggest change being in the way the bishops speak of their colleagues – ‘the knowledge they have of them is no longer superficial, greater honesty among colleagues’ (Interview 2). This bishop also spoke of his own ability to suspend judgement and check his assumptions in his daily encounters with those with whom he profoundly disagreed. He spoke of his ‘recognition of his own judgemental and intolerant attitude’ and connected this recognition to his participation in Episcopal Accompaniment. Another interviewee reflected that the process has helped him to ‘notice others in the diocese more and see them as people, not just functionaries’ (Interview 4) suggesting that the kind of relationship building that happened in the process and the skills modelled do have a trickle-down effect into daily encounters. A number of interviewees reported their having been reconnected to a deeper sense of the pastoral nature of episcopal ministry.

Despite the dominant narratives attesting to the ways in which bishops had developed a deeper openness, other respondents were more cautious about the idea that relationships with colleagues have improved as a result of Episcopal Accompaniment. One bishop, when asked about maintaining improved relationships between peers suggested: ‘this is more of a challenge than the programme itself. We had good relationships during the programme but when the pressure of work comes back you tend revert to your old style and to see other bishops as rivals instead of friends’ (Interview 4). Another, part of the sustained Accompaniment process, suggested that whilst ‘this experience has made a difference at least between those of us who shared this [...], we very easily slip back into ‘old ways’ of relating, and even competition’ (Interview 5). However, this bishop did also reflect that as a result of the process, he ‘can understand better why [others] react in certain ways’.

The presence of an external facilitator was critical to fostering the new kinds of vulnerability, communication and friendship that were reported. Many respondents commented on the personal natures of the facilitators and it is clear that they were intimately connected to the ways in which the ‘safe space’ of the group was created and held. That the facilitator was an outsider was deemed to be very important – someone who was apart from the context, not implicated in insider dynamics of power or allegiance and who could bring in learning and experiences from other places to offer as alternative models to the group. Whilst overall the contextual knowledge held by facilitators was deemed to be good, the importance of the facilitators’ knowledge and understanding of the context in which the Accompaniments took place and their awareness of specific challenges facing the province at the time was mentioned by some respondents as something that needed to be ensured in all future Accompaniments. It was recognised that perhaps the weakest aspect of the Episcopal Accompaniment Process concerned follow up – between facilitator and participants and between participants themselves - after an Accompaniment had ended. From USPG’s point of view, issues around follow up are primarily a problem of staff capacity. The facilitator interviewed recognised that on-going mentorship for groups was needed, that ‘Accompaniment is an on-going thing’ but that this required investing in the process in a different way and growing a team of mentors and facilitators (Interview with facilitator).

The appreciation of a breadth of perspective and experience articulated in relation to the presence of an outside facilitator was reflected in comments about the diversity amongst the bishops in the Accompaniment group. Where it was the case, the presence of bishops from other countries and

denominations was greatly appreciated. Some participants felt that the mixture of ‘newer’ with ‘older’ bishops was of value, particularly to those who had just been consecrated who could learn from those who were more experienced. Some of the more experienced respondents lamented the lack of a process like Episcopal Accompaniment earlier on in their episcopal ministries and felt it would have been invaluable. A number of bishops urged that, if possible, all new bishops should experience this kind of process in their first few years as bishops. Overall, it appeared that within the group, a diversity that did not threaten the possibility of creating identification across the group of bishops was a very stimulating and valuable for participants.

The exercises used within the Accompaniment processes were found to be very useful and participants wanted to be able to share the learnings of the process with others. The main query around process content was whether it might be possible to run a specific ‘issue based’ rather than general process, based on contextual needs? Named themes included: conflict management; coping with difference; competition and suspicion between bishops. Whether an issues based process would be compatible with the ways in which Episcopal Accompaniment currently works is a matter for consideration. Generally, the content was very well received and a number of respondents asked for an Episcopal Accompaniment Manual or tool set to promote and engage the process in other arenas, including with diocesan clergy. Others suggested that USPG invest in training facilitators for *clergy* development in a similar spirit to the Accompaniment process. There was a strong sense that bishops wanted their diocesan clergy to experience the benefits of Accompaniment, if at all possible<sup>3</sup>. One or two respondents spoke of replicating the exercises used as a structured way of sharing the insights of the time together with wider audiences – notably diocesan clergy - and this seemed like an interesting way of cascading the experience and the learning from Episcopal Accompaniment out to a wider group.

Overall, the evidence suggests that across the groups, Episcopal Accompaniment drew bishops out of their everyday work contexts and provided the time and space for them to reconnect them to: themselves by recounting their own life stories; to each other through deep sharing; to God through a daily pattern of scriptural reflection, prayer, Eucharist and community life. Because there was no work agenda, the ‘meeting was relaxed, not driven...relationships developed better when we had no business to do’ (Interview 7). The result was an atmosphere of ‘reduced suspicion’ (Interview 6) between bishops in which some old colleagues felt like they were ‘meeting different people as they were outside the church structures’ (Interview 10). It is clear that Episcopal Accompaniment was able to equip bishops with a number of alternative models and conceptual tools to reflect on their ministry, their leadership style and their encounters with others and to take back into their ministries.

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<sup>3</sup> Other suggestions for scaling up this process included whether a day of Accompaniment could be given to each Provincial Synod and whether this type of process might be useful to the Primates?

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The data gathered in this evaluation suggest that the main aims of both this evaluation and of Episcopal Accompaniment (see pp. 4 – 5) have been met. In many cases, the process appears to have had a profound and long-term impact on those whom have experienced it in ways that benefit the individual participants themselves, their Houses of Bishops, and in many cases their wider circles. However, there do remain a number of areas in which it was felt that the process could be improved and developed. With this in mind, it is hoped that the following recommendations will do two things:

- i. Enhance the value of the process itself within USPG and for those whom benefit from it.
- ii. Support a more strategic approach to episcopal support in which Episcopal Accompaniment is considered in strategic relation to the array of training for episcopal development around the Anglican Communion

### **Strategic Recommendations: Communion Wide**

#### ***11. New Bishops' Training***

Globally, more emphasis needs to be placed on support for new bishops, particularly in the area of on-going mentoring. It was highlighted that ACSA are already doing this. Both the question of how this support and training can be provided as well as how lessons can be learnt from ACSA and other providers need to be addressed. The integration of Episcopal Accompaniment with other support providers will help to generate a more strategic approach.

#### ***12. Strategic Review of Current Provision for Bishops***

There is a need for a more detailed piece of research that maps out training/mentoring/pastoral programmes offered to bishops (including in the area of mediation/conflict resolution). Provision needs to be considered in terms of geographic availability and particular type. Ideally any mapping needs to outline the aims and focus of any programme and offer any evaluative evidence so as to understand the unique value and contribution (or otherwise) of the USPG process in relation to other opportunities, whether and how it complements other kinds of provision and how it can be best offered - particularly if real vacuums in terms of episcopal support can be identified.

#### ***13. Needs Assessment for Bishops***

This evaluative review has captured a range of information in relation to the challenges that bishops are facing and any Communion wide/USPG based development of provision in this area could usefully build on this informal 'needs assessment' to evaluate whether the provisions available are meeting the articulated needs of bishops, and how more could be offered that is responsive to the very real challenges those in episcopal ministry face. Strategic conversations with other providers could help USPG and others to identify

opportunities for collaboration and to ensure that resources are not being wasted through duplication of efforts.

## **Process Recommendations**

### ***14. Follow Up with Participants***

Follow up between participants needs actively to be encouraged in order to sustain the trust built up in the process. It is recommended that some of the discussion time within the process could be given over to planning together how to maintain communication and momentum, so that imagining and sustaining relationships in the future becomes a part of the programme itself.

### ***15. Resources and Manuals***

In response to these requests for follow up material (and some for preparation material ahead of the process) it is suggested that current facilitators jointly compile a list of key resources and tools which are available online under different topic headings to act as a store for future Accompaniment facilitators to draw from and add to. That input is garnered from participating bishops as to the kinds of resources they would like to receive after the Accompaniment process is also advisable.

### ***16. Facilitator's Contextual Knowledge.***

It is recommended that the facilitator have at least one conversation with the Archbishop of the province before the first Accompaniment and one conversation for every subsequent Accompaniment to keep them apprised of any issues within the province that might be impacting on the lives and ministries of bishops.

### ***17. Content Design***

Different learning styles need to be considered by the facilitator in the planning of the Accompaniment process. Wherever possible they need to incorporate a variety of activities to meet varying learning styles. The balance between content training material and the more reflective, introspective spaces needs to be considered in relation to what any specific Episcopal Accompaniment process is trying to achieve.

### ***18. Diversity of Participant Selection***

Given time, money and geographical constraints as well as the sensitivity of some of the issues discussed and the provincial focus of certain Accompaniment meetings, it is recommended that the range of participants for each Accompaniment be evaluated depending on the context of the meeting, but where possible a broad range of experiences be included geographically and in terms of episcopal experience.

## Recommendations for USPG

### **19. *Strengthening Strategic Understanding***

It is recommended that USPG understand the value of the Episcopal Accompaniment process in relation to the achievement of their strategic plans and goals. The Episcopal Accompaniment process contributes directly to USPG's strategic priority of 'leadership and accompaniment.' This review process offers an example of how the fit of programmes to strategy can be evaluated.

### **20. *Strategic Learning***

It is recommended that USPG design a more systematic, longitudinal monitoring process so that the long term impact that the Accompaniment process is having can be recorded and better understood. It is also recommended that such data is shared with others in the field of episcopal support, to ensure that there is an on-going, strategic and responsive dialogue around episcopal support at Communion level.

The Episcopal Accompaniment process offers much needed time and space for bishops to reconnect with themselves, with each other and with God so that they can explore, deepen and develop their understanding of their Episcopal roles. These opportunities are greatly needed and highly appreciated by bishops. Time and financial investment into the development, strengthening, availability and continuance of Episcopal Accompaniment are strongly advised. The recording and disseminating of learning garnered through the process to a wide range of stakeholders and potential collaborators is likely to be highly valuable to all those involved in leadership training around the Anglican Communion. It is hoped that doing so will assist the development of greater coordination and collaboration around the critical area of episcopal support.