

TRANSMISSION

The magazine of USPG. Founded 1701

Spring 2017

Supporting girls' education in Malawi

Page 14



 UNITED SOCIETY
PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

USPG⁺

Cover: A girl in Mangochi, Malawi.

USPG/Leah Gordon

USPG is an Anglican mission agency supporting churches around the world in their mission to bring fullness of life to the communities they serve. Theologically, practically and financially, we encourage and enable churches within the Anglican Communion to act as the hands and feet of Christ. Together, we are working to improve health, tackle poverty, put children in school, challenge discrimination, nurture leaders, give a voice to women, and much more. Founded 1701.

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HOLISTIC MISSION

Reading through this edition of *Transmission* I am struck afresh by the diversity of the work that USPG supports around the world. Of course, it has always been this way because our understanding of mission is that it is holistic, which means multi-faceted, reaching mind, body and soul – the individual and the community, locally, nationally and internationally. This is quite a challenge! It is the work of God and our role is to participate in it as best we can, in our vulnerability and with our particular skills.

In this edition of *Transmission*, you will find articles looking at some of the diverse work we are supporting throughout the Anglican Communion, including emergency famine response (page 3), inter faith dialogue (page 5), support for refugees (pages 6 and 8), efforts to combat human trafficking (page 12), and support for girls' education (page 14).

We will be showcasing this diversity at our annual conference in July. We have an exciting line up of speakers from across the world church – see details on page 19 – and we hope you will come and join us.

Janette O'Neill

Chief Executive, USPG

If you'd like to receive *Transmission* on a regular basis, please email eunicek@uspg.org.uk

Church responds to famine in southern Africa

Erratic weather patterns caused by climate change have led to severe food shortages in parts of southern Africa.

Too much or too little rain has ruined harvests, leaving millions of families struggling to feed themselves in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Lesotho and Malawi.

In response, USPG has been supporting the emergency relief work of the Anglican Churches with the help of donations to our Rapid Response Fund.

George Willow, of the Anglican Council in Malawi, said the church had provided some of the hardest-hit families with flour or maize seeds, and said the church is also helping communities prepare for future emergencies.

He said: 'We are encouraging people to plant more trees, especially along the river banks and in the uplands, to reduce the rate of floods and dry spells in the future. And, funds permitting, we want to provide smallholder farmers with seeds that are drought resistant.'

In Zimbabwe, the Revd Maxwell Kapachawo said: 'Reports of communities starving are a reality. Unlike 2015's drought, when famine mostly hit the rural population, this time even those in urban settings are struggling to make ends meet.'

He added: 'There is nothing worse than having a human being go to sleep on an empty stomach.'

In Madagascar, in the Diocese of Toliara, Bishop Todd McGregor said people in rural communities were so desperate they were

prepared to risk eating locusts that are known to be toxic.

The bishop reported leading a confirmation service in Betioky village where a young man collapsed from hunger.

Bishop Todd said: 'During the service, while I was laying on hands he collapsed. We lifted him up and began to rehydrate him. He was so weak and exhausted from the impact of the famine.'



Also in the Diocese of Toliara, Development Co-ordinator Gasthé Alphonse said: 'Southern Madagascar experienced heavy rains causing floods. Infrastructure was devastated, including roads, schools, cultivated fields, houses, offices. Some people died, others are now homeless.'

Anglican Churches, with their grassroots networks, have been able to reach remote communities that are often overlooked by governments and large aid organisations. ■

Photo: Locusts for sale in Malawi

Credit: Church of Malawi

PLEASE PRAY

Read more about Malawi and Zimbabwe in our latest prayer diary.



USPG protests killing of miners in South Africa

USPG joined a demonstration protesting that mining company Lonmin had not done enough to compensate the families of miners who were shot while striking for a living wage.

The miners held their strike on 16 August 2012, in Marikana, near Johannesburg, South Africa, but the authorities chose to categorise them as criminals and opened fire – killing 34.

USPG Director for Global Relations Rachel Parry, who stood alongside protesters outside Lonmin's AGM in London in January, said: 'The miners were not asking for the salaries of the executives living in London who were

getting rich on the platinum mined by these miners. They were asking for a living wage to support their families – and 34 of them were shot, many in the back.

'To this day, their widows and children have not been adequately compensated for losing their family breadwinners.

'While Lonmin and shareholders continue to reap profits from the mine, we were calling for fair compensation for the widows and an apology from Lonmin for this act.

'With the fifth anniversary of the shootings coming up on 16 August this year, we will not forget those who lost their lives, and not forget to stand alongside those calling for an apology and for recompense.'

Leading the protest was the Rt Revd Johannes Seoka, a former international trustee of USPG, and a former Bishop of Pretoria Diocese, where the murders took place.

Lonmin issued a statement on the day of the London protest which stated it was improving housing conditions for workers, and stated: 'Lonmin is in constant engagement with affected stakeholders, worker representatives and trade unions.' ■



Photo: USPG joined protesters outside the Lonmin AGM in London

Ghanaian priest supports mission in The Gambia

USPG has responded to a call for assistance from the bishop in the Diocese of The Gambia to support the development of local mission.

We arranged for Canon Solomon Neequaye, a priest from the Diocese of Accra, Ghana, to take up a three-year placement in The Gambia through our *Exchanging Places*

programme. Canon Solomon is setting up training programmes and organising vocation-discernment schemes among both clergy and laity.

In addition, we are providing funding to train two ordinands from The Gambia at St Nicholas Seminary Provincial Seminary in Cape Coast, Ghana. (*continued on p5*)

Christian-Buddhist consultation leads to deeper understanding and co-operation

A historic meeting between Christians and Buddhists in Myanmar has led to greater understanding and opportunity for further co-operation between the two faith communities.

The USPG-supported consultation in January – officially titled ‘Voices of Hope in a New Era’ – was designed to help Anglicans, Lutherans and Buddhists explore how they might work together.

Global Relations Director Rachel Parry said the event was a time of deep enrichment for all participants – including delegates from outside the country.

She said: ‘It has been deeply moving to witness. One important moment of reconciliation saw a Buddhist participant from Japan movingly express his thanks to the church in Myanmar for hosting him. It must be remembered that Japan occupied Myanmar during World War II – so this participant felt particularly touched at being received and welcomed by the church.’

The consultation was an indicator of how the political climate is in transition following 60 years of turbulence. In this context, continuing to develop positive relations between Christians and the majority Buddhist population will benefit the nation greatly in



terms of peace-building and reconciliation.

Moving forward, delegates hope the consultation will lead to greater collaboration between Christians and Buddhists on development projects and inter faith dialogue at leadership and grassroots levels. ■

Photo: Myanmar Archbishop Stephen Than Myint Oo greets Professor Dr Chekinda at the consultation.

Credit: Church of Myanmar

Bishop James Odico, of The Gambia, said: ‘The Diocese of The Gambia is in dire need of trained evangelists, lay readers and deacons. So we are greatly blessed to receive this support from USPG and the Diocese of Accra to help to achieve our aim of effectively building God’s kingdom in The Gambia.’

USPG Programme Manager Habib Nader explained: ‘Our Exchanging Places Programme encourages the sharing of personnel between our church partners in the

southern hemisphere.

These exchanges benefit both sending and receiving churches because they are able to share gifts and resources and learn from each other, which is a rich blessing for both parties.’

In recent years, the *Exchanging Places* programme has seen Anglican personnel go from India to South Africa, Cuba to Uruguay, Kenya to Tanzania, Lesotho to South Africa, and Egypt to Tunisia and Algeria. ■

USPG funding provides lifeline to hostel for unaccompanied refugee minors in Greece

USPG has stepped in to help fund a hostel in Greece that is looking after unaccompanied minors.

Opened in 2011 by Apostoli, which is the humanitarian arm of the Greek Orthodox Church, Hestia Hostel is providing vital support for children who have fled danger zones in Afghanistan, Congo, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria.

However, last year, European Union funding for the hostel fell through so USPG, and other agencies, have agreed to cover costs for 2017.

As of January this year, the official number of unaccompanied minors in Greece was 2,300. Of this number, around 1,000 are in inadequate accommodation – such as refugee camps or detention centres – or on the streets.

In this context, there is a vital need for homes such as the Hestia Hostel.

Vasileios Meichanetsidis, of Apostoli,

said of the young people who arrive at the hostel: 'They struggle to come to terms with their experiences of conflict and violent displacement, which are extremely raw. It is clear that these children and adolescents are very frustrated with the ongoing situation in their home countries. Our support is vital for their overall survival and welfare.'

Rebecca Boardman, USPG Programmes Co-ordinator, said: 'Hestia is a safe space away from risks such as trafficking and exploitation. Staff provide personalised care, taking into account the hopes and needs of each minor. We are delighted to be able to support this initiative through our partnership with the Anglican Church in Greece.'

Abdul, a hostel resident, tells his story:

I came from Kabul, in Afghanistan. It was very insecure. I survived suicide attacks three times. I saw the explosion, the corpses, everything. I was scared, so I left Afghanistan.



That was five years ago.

I came to Iran with my parents and siblings. But it wasn't good in Iran. I couldn't go to school or get a job because I didn't have the necessary papers. I left my family and came to Europe with smugglers, which is the only way.

First I came to Turkey. The smugglers put eight guys in a small car, so tight we could hardly breathe. We were stuck between the borders of Iran and Turkey without food or water. It was one of the most awful experiences of my life.

Eventually we arrived in Istanbul in Turkey. We tried to make the crossing to Greece by boat. There were about 45

of us in the boat, and the waves were very high and water was coming in, so we prayed to God.

Eventually, a boat brought me to the island of Lesbos, in Greece. Then I was taken to a shelter that was really a jail.

Finally, I was brought to the Hestia Hostel. It's very good here. I was so very, very happy! I have my own room, a supervisor who looks after me, and they send me to school.

[Abdul, not his real name, is now hoping to move to Canada to be with relatives.]

Vassiliki Giamali, a social worker at the Hestia Hostel, reports:

The hostel provides accommodation for 20 boys that come to Greece without their families. They are unaccompanied, so it's like a home for them. We provide food, clothing and all the basic things. We provide psychological care and try to help the boys to integrate.

The circumstances of their journey here has made them very strong. So, although they

are minors, their experiences make them older, more mature. Many of the boys have had to work for the smugglers and traffickers in order to get enough money to make their journey. It's hard to imagine the difficulties these boys have passed through.

When they come here, they all want to learn, they want to go to school, even if they



are about to leave in two months or so. They deserve better.

When a boy reaches 18, we try to find them another place so he can continue with work or education.

Most of the boys are Muslims. In Greek society there are no mosques, so the boys each have a small carpet in their rooms so they can pray.

For us it's very important that the boys keep in contact with their own culture because it's like keeping in contact with themselves and with their families. So, we encourage them to cook food from their countries and we have books in their language explaining about their traditions. ■

Above: Unaccompanied minor in a refugee camp in Greece. Left: Abdul, a resident of Hestia Hostel, explains how he fled Afghanistan.

Credit: USPG/Leah Gordon



'We are refugees helping refugees. Finland is my parish.'

USPG is supporting the work of Fr Amos Manga, a refugee from Sudan, who is working with the Diocese in Europe among Sudanese and Syrian refugees in Finland. Fr Amos tells his story and describes his important work.

I left Sudan in 1999. I had been preaching Christianity – this is before independence in South Sudan, when Sudan was ruled by Sharia Law. But there were people who wanted to stop the growth of Christianity, so I became a target.

I received death threats; I was arrested, tortured and beaten. So I decided to take my family and escape. I drove across the desert, crossing the border into Uganda, with six people in my car.

For three years we stayed in a refugee camp in Uganda. I joined the Episcopal

Church there and worked as a lay reader.

But we were still living with uncertainty and fear, so a number of us went to Cairo to the UN office and they accepted our case. Some of us came to Australia, some to America, and we came to Finland. We were the third group of Sudanese refugees to be given a home in Finland.

It was difficult when we first arrived. We didn't understand the culture and we weren't used to the extreme cold. I also had to learn the language.

I started to pay visits to the Sudanese communities living there.

Then we started worshipping together – all denominations – the important thing was that we could be Christians together.

We are refugees helping refugees, which means we help each other. We advise them on how to respect their host country and how to integrate into society. We show them how to use buses and advise them always to carry their address in case they get lost. We advise young people to avoid bars and nightclubs because Sudanese refugees can attract a lot of unwelcome attention. I'm talking from experience. Some people ask why we are there, and once I was even asked: Why are you black? When this sort of thing happens, we offer advice on how not to get angry. I tell the men that avoiding a fight doesn't mean they are cowards – it just means you are not that sort of person.

Now the refugees are building good relationships and making friends in their schools, communities and work places.

Finland is my parish. I travel a lot because we have refugee communities in different cities. I go to be with them, to pray with them and share the word of God.

Unlike some countries in Europe, Finland is very welcoming to refugees and does its best to help. For example, the government

provides accommodation and food and helps to meet other basic needs, even providing Finnish language courses.

Recently, I was asked to help with the refugees arriving from Syria, who also speak Arabic – like the Sudanese – so I am able to help.

In all of my ministry, I don't consider that

My view is that a priest is here to serve others. It's my duty to help, to be a counsellor for those in trouble, to remind people that God is our helper.

I'm doing it alone. God's spirit helps me, encourages me and supports me.

My view is that a priest is here to serve others. It's my duty to help, to be a counsellor for those in trouble, to remind people that God is our helper. I often say to the refugees: God has been helping you on your journey, so please remember to pray and follow God's way. ■

Photo: Fr Amos Manga visits a refugee camp in Uganda

LEARN MORE ABOUT REFUGEES

Migration and Movement is a six-week study course looking at economic migration, the plight of refugees, the displacement of communities due to climate change, and human trafficking.

Order booklets or read online at www.uspg.org.uk/migration



PARTNERS IN MISSION

Support God's global mission at grassroots level through USPG's direct-giving scheme.

Partners in Mission is an opportunity for your church to focus your prayer and giving on a particular USPG programme and country of your choice. USPG's church partners across the world are participating in God's mission to bring life in all its fullness – they truly are the hands and feet of Christ in their communities. Please consider joining with them in mission through USPG.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Pledge to support a programme of your choice through prayer and giving.
- 100% of your money will go directly to that programme.
- Receive regular updates and points for prayer.
- Invite a USPG speaker to your church to learn more about your programme.



For details about the programmes and how to sign-up, visit www.uspg.org.uk/pim

USPG⁺



'He said he would kill my parents, so I got very scared.'

Daya, aged 17, from a village in North Durgupur, India, recalls how she was tricked into a violent relationship and forced labour. Happily, she was rescued by the Church of North India (CNI) Anti Human Trafficking team, which is supported by USPG.

I live with my mum, dad and grandmother, and I have two sisters and a brother – I'm the oldest. We live in a simple house made from bamboo matting.

Like most girls, I've always worked. I cook breakfast and evening meals for my family and I work in the fields, as well as going to school. My mum and dad are both hired farmhands.

About a year ago I got a call on my mobile phone. It was a boy who said he'd got the

wrong number. He was very sweet to me, and he called me many times in the space of four days, then he asked me to run away with him. When I said I didn't want to he started making threats, saying he would kill my parents, so I got very scared.

Next he came and found me on my way to school. I learned later that he had identified me as an easy target and got my phone number by asking around. He tried to persuade me to marry him. When I refused he made more threats, and said, 'If you don't

want to get married, at least come with me and we will work in Delhi for three or four months.' I didn't want anything bad to happen to my parents, so I went with him. I wish I had told my parents, but I was too scared.

In Delhi, he made me work in a biscuit factory, where I slept in the workers' quarters. I worked from 8am till 8pm and he took all the money. During the day he would get drunk with the campus guard, and in the evenings he would beat and molest me. I even learned that he was already married.

None of the other girls at the factory knew what was going on. The only people who knew were one of the guy's friends, the guard and the guard's wife, but they didn't do anything. In fact, the guard also tried to molest me. I was scared because I thought they might sell me off, and my life would get even worse.

One day, when he wasn't around, I called my aunt in despair. My aunt said, 'Come back and we'll get you married to someone decent.' But the boy returned and overheard the conversation. He got very angry, took my phone and started hitting me. After that, every time I asked to talk to my family he would beat me or threaten to sell me or kill me.

Back home, my father saw a leaflet from CNI's Anti Human Trafficking (AHT) programme and contacted them. The AHT team was able to track down the man, and they helped my father to lodge an official complaint, which scared the man and his friends into bringing me back home.

When we got off the train, we had to catch a bus. He told me, 'I'm going to the washroom, wait here for me.' I waited but he didn't return.

He was gone a long time. After a while I started looking for him, but I couldn't find him. He must have run off. Then a rickshaw

TRAFFICKING STATISTICS

- 18 million Indians – which is 1.4% of the country's 1.3 billion population – are affected by forced or bonded labour (Global Slavery Index)
- Men mostly work for rice mills, clothing factories, brick kilns or agriculture. Women and girls are mostly forced into sex work
- India has around 3 million sex workers, of which 35 per cent enter the trade before the age of 18 (Indian government)
- People trafficking is the fastest growing means by which people are enslaved, the fastest growing international crime, and one of the largest sources of income for organised crime (UN)

wallah helped me to get on a bus to my home village.

Now I'm back home with my mum and dad. If we have enough money, I want to return to high school. I want to study and never be dependent on a man again.

There is still a complaint against the boy. The boy's father has tried threatening my father into dropping the case and settling out of court, and I'm worried the boy might do something to my family. But I think I should keep going forward with criminal proceedings against him. ■

Photo: The Church of North India is seeking to prevent the trafficking of girls

(USPG/Leah Gordon)

Find out more about human trafficking at www.uspg.org.uk/trafficking

'My dream is to support my family and educate my children'

A programme run by the Church of Malawi, with support from USPG, is helping to provide girls with an education.



There are many factors that lead to girls in Malawi dropping out of school. There is poverty, which means many families cannot afford uniforms or school materials – and tradition means families that can afford materials tend to favour boys over girls. There is the problem of unclean school toilets that lack privacy, which is especially a problem for girls when they reach puberty. And there are social pressures that can lead to girls getting married young or

getting pregnant.

In response, the Anglican Church in Malawi has set up a programme that is helping to keep girls in school in four parishes – one parish in each of Malawi's four dioceses.

Church committees identify which families are most in need and provide free uniforms and stationery. Girl-friendly toilets are being built and, where funds allow, girls are provided with sanitary towels. Also,

mothers and school matrons are being trained to run after-school clubs at which girls can discuss their concerns and encourage each other to stay in education.

As a result of these measures, the number of girls attending school has risen while the number of teenage pregnancies has dropped.

But much more needs to be done. There are many villages – and thousands of girls – who need help.

Last year, Carrie Myers and Emma Bridger visited Malawi with USPG and met some of the girls who are benefiting from the education programme. (The girls answers have been paraphrased for clarity.)

CHIMPANGO'S STORY

Chimpango, 14, lives with her mother and eight siblings. She attends Champhoyo School, in Kayoyo. She says:

I'm very pleased to be given a school uniform and school equipment.

It used to be so difficult. We couldn't afford books and no-one would lend me any. And because we have to wear a uniform, I was often sent home from school because I didn't have one.

My dream is to continue to work hard so I can become a breadwinner in my family and, if I get married, I will be able to educate my children.

I'd like to be a nurse, or perhaps a doctor because I like the idea of operating on people! I'd also like to help develop my community. For example, the roads are poor, the water is not always safe to drink, and we have no electricity. I would like to change that.

Please pray that I might have wisdom to be able to change my community.

JUDITH'S STORY

Judith, 14, is an only child. Her mother is a nurse in Tanzania and her father is away in the army. She is a boarder at St Joseph's Church, in Chintheche, and lives with her aunt and uncle during holidays. She says:

It's good because we have new toilets at school. Before we had to use toilets which had no doors, which meant we could be seen. But now we have privacy. This encourages more girls to come to school.

I joined the after school social club, and now I am the chair. Because a lot of girls drop out, we receive counselling on why we should keep coming to school. Also, boys want us to be their girlfriends, but we are told to be careful so we can avoid HIV, other illnesses and pregnancy.

I really want to complete my education so I can support my family, because most of them are poor.

STELLA'S STORY

Stella, 15, is a student at Champhoyo School, in Kayoyo. She lives with her mum, dad and three of her seven siblings. Her parents are small-scale farmers. She says:

The uniform and learning materials have changed my life. Before we were struggling to buy them. I'm so thankful. I've never had a uniform before – and I was often being sent home from school. I think nearly half of the children in school don't have a uniform.

I like the after school club which has taught me how to protect myself from early pregnancy. Many girls think when they become more grown up they should get married, so they drop out of school. But my teacher really encourages the girls to stay in school.

Another good thing is that we have sanitary towels. Before, a lot of girls would stay out of school when they were having their periods, so this is good.

I still need to help with jobs in our house. This means I can't always do as much homework as I'd like to. But I am determined to work hard. ■

Photo: Chimpango (right) and a friend in their new school uniform

Credit: USPG/Carrie Myers

Placement taught me about exploitation and discrimination

Caitlin Thomson, an ordinand in training at Cranmer Hall in Durham, reports on a four-week placement in Hong Kong with our Expanding Horizons programme

I chose Hong Kong because I had some familiarity with the culture already, having taught English there in a church kindergarten five years ago.

Arrangements were made, and there was financial support from USPG. I was to be based at St John's Cathedral, in Hong Kong; my hope was to learn about the shape of Anglicanism and Christian mission in a different part of the world. The experience was both inspiring and challenging.

I was particularly challenged by the encounters I had with the domestic workers in the congregation, who are served by various ministries at the cathedral, such as Help for Domestic Helpers and Mission to Migrant Workers.

These women workers left families – mostly in the Philippines and Indonesia – to work in Hong Kong, where they are treated – in some cases – as less than human. I heard about women who had been beaten by their employers and about a woman whose 'room' was only slightly bigger than a kennel. Talking to these women taught me about the human experience of exploitation.

It was immensely humbling to share meals with these women who, despite going through so much, are still able to laugh. The dedication of these women to attend church services when they have less than a full day off each week was inspiring.

These encounters prompted me to wonder whether there are people in my own



community in England that might be similarly hidden or overlooked, and how my church could respond to these people's needs.

My placement also challenged me because I was in a language-minority. Even though I had basic 'survival' language skills in Cantonese, I was only able to follow the general gist of any situation where Cantonese was the main spoken language, whether in worship, church meetings or fellowship.

Through experiencing the confusion that comes with not understanding everything that's happening, I started to consider how important it is to help language-minority speakers not to feel like outsiders so they can be truly welcomed when they come to church – for example by enunciating clearly, providing translations, and so on. I found it useful to reflect on Revelation 7:9, which depicts a church in which everyone worships as equals, bringing their own language and cultures before the throne of God.

As a result of this placement, I feel inspired to continue exploring the great variety of expressions of churchmanship that exist across the Anglican Communion, and to consider how this might influence my ministry in England. ■

FIND OUT MORE

Read about Expanding Horizons at
www.uspg.org.uk/horizons

OUT AND ABOUT IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

USPG's new Volunteering Manager Rebecca Woollgar reports on how churches in Britain and Ireland are engaging with mission – and offers some ideas for how to get involved.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

We are always looking for volunteers to help us inform congregations about our work; this could involve distributing our magazine, prayer diary and other resources in your church or parish. We'd like to hear from people who can help with fundraising and from those who'd like to speak in churches about our work.

We also have volunteers who run USPG stalls on our behalf, perhaps at diocesan events. Recently, Pam Kirkland and Tricia Hamilton did a great job promoting USPG on our stall at General Synod in London.

BOOK A SPEAKER

One of the best ways for a congregation to learn about USPG and the world church is to book one of our trained volunteer speakers. There is no charge – although a donation is always appreciated! Recently, Elizabeth Taylor spoke at St Boniface and St Martin in the Wood, Chancellors Ford, about her experience of working in Tanzania. The church reported: 'We found Elizabeth's illustrated talk very helpful. She managed to include an overview of the current work, and wove this into the theme and readings for the day.'

Please get in touch with me (details below) if you'd like to arrange for a speaker to visit your church.

BAKE OFF FUN

Thank you to St Andrew's and St Mark's Church, in Surbiton, which raised £500 for USPG by holding a special Bake Off competition with an African theme.

Winner in the grown-ups category was Jo Casey with a delicious hippo cake, while Natalie won the junior category with a giant lion-shaped cookie (photos by John Kelly).

Organiser Janice Price said: 'There was so much creativity. We had fruits grown in Africa and cakes depicting African landmarks and animals. It was so much fun.'

She added: 'The aim was to advertise to our congregation how we are standing alongside our brothers and sisters in Africa.'



If you'd like to volunteer for USPG or book a speaker for your church, call Rebecca Woollgar on 020 7921 2220 or email rebeccaw@uspg.org.uk

The roots of African Caribbean spirituality and the church today

Article by the Revd Carlton J Turner PhD, Team Vicar in the Diocese of Lichfield and Honorary Research Fellow at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham.

The creativity of Caribbean people cannot be overlooked. A good look at West Indian carnivals in Britain/Ireland reveal an explosion of colour, powerful music and dancing, and an ability to incorporate people of all colours, cultures and dispositions.

But what if I tell you that such festivals are liturgical?

Yes. Historically, they developed as a means of providing slaves and their descendants with an alternative liturgy – one that extended beyond the walls of the church and involved the participation of all people, European and slave, white and black, without distinction. Such a liturgy affirmed the human worth and dignity of all God's people.

To understand this point we need to remember that African Caribbean spirituality was forged in the furnace of the Caribbean slave plantations. Here the philosophies, religions and worldviews of Africa came into contact with European, predominantly Christian, cultures.

European societies were brutal towards Africans and almost solely focused on the acquisition of wealth. To survive, slaves and their descendants learned to creatively navigate different ways of being and worldviews.

On the one hand, they learned to confess a European view of God that was encapsulated in formal creeds, confined to



a building and a church hierarchy – a God seemingly intolerant of African beliefs and practices. On the other hand, they found ways to hold onto their ancestral religiosities, while also critiquing, affirming and claiming aspects of the faith taught to them through oppression.

Perhaps the lesson here for the church is to continually look for ways of engaging with all people, to seek liturgies that set aside our cultural norms and look beyond the church walls for inspiration.

We could perhaps summarise the process like this: on the plantations, the discipline and organisation of the more-conceptual European understanding of God blended with a more instinctual experience of God that retained the central importance of celebration, mysticism and an affinity to nature, and which was less fearful of the human body, movement and dance.

Through the endurance of centuries of pain, African Caribbean Christians has acquired a faith that is rooted in an appreciation of a mystical and spiritual world beyond organised religion.

Nevertheless, this robust faith, forged in the pain of oppression, does not forget a biblical truth: that oppression of all kinds is to be resisted by the church, even if the church itself is the culprit.

Perhaps the lesson here is for the church to be introspective and to always be vigilant to how it might be marginalising or oppressing others. ■



SERVING CHURCHES STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

USPG Annual Conference: 17-19 July 2017

High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8SG

Discover how USPG is working in partnership with Anglican Churches around the world to help serve local churches and strengthen communities – with talks, workshops, ideas to take back to your parish, and a chance to meet some of our world church partners.

FREE for ordinands, USPG diocesan representatives, and *Journey With Us* participants.

To find out more and book a place:
www.uspg.org.uk/conference2017 or
call Kathy McLeish on 020 7921 2202.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- Jo Musker-Sherwood, Hope for the Future, discussing climate justice;
- The Revd Canon Grace Kaiso, Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, looking at community development;
- The Revd Dr Carlton Turner, Church in the Province of the West Indies, exploring church growth;
- The Rt Revd John Wilme, Bishop of Toungoo in Myanmar, speaking about protecting health.
- The Rt Revd David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop, Diocese in Europe, focussing on responding to crises.



USPG LENT APPEAL 2017: SUPPORT GIRLS IN MALAWI WITH THE GIFT OF EDUCATION

Many girls in Malawi are unable to attend school. The biggest barriers are unhelpful expectations and peer pressure, the absence of girl-only toilets, and a lack of uniforms and educational materials. Imagine being 14 years old and watching your dreams of a future slip away.

In response, USPG and the Anglican Church of Malawi are running a programme to increase school attendance among girls.

- A gift of £9 could provide a girl facing dangerous peer pressure with the safety of a newly-established after school club.
- A gift of £16 could give a girl still stuck at home without a uniform and supplies, her ticket to school – a remarkable gift.
- A gift of £48 could provide eight schoolgirls worried about using the toilet while at school with access to a much-needed, private girl-only toilet.

Please make a donation at www.uspg.org.uk/lent and give girls in Malawi an education and hope for the future.

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