

# KOINONIA

## THE GRACE OF UNTIDINESS

The Diocese in Europe

## TO WORSHIP ME, FEED MY SHEEP

Hospital care in Bangladesh

## FROM POLICE TO PRIESTHOOD

Treading an unlikely path

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# KOINONIA

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The Rev'd  
Duncan Dormor

## EDITORIAL

By the Rev'd Duncan Dormor,  
General Secretary USPG

Does the hierarchy of the Anglican church limit opportunities for lay people? And if it does, what are the implications? Is serving the church in a lay role a vocation? and what is the role of women's lay ministry in the Church today? These and other thought-provoking questions are examined in this edition of Koinonia which focusses on the extraordinary contribution made to churches across the Anglican Communion by its lay members. In the context of Covid-19 causing suffering and grief to millions of people, lay workers continue to bring hope and comfort to many.

This extraordinary body of faithful servants enables the sharing of God's mission in countless ways, living out Timothy 2:15 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.' This role is not reserved exclusively for those in ordained ministry. I believe the global church would be poorer without the selfless augmentation of lay people which acts as an inspiration to us all - something highlighted by Lana McPhail's thoughtful reflections.

Sister Gillian is the Medical Director of Bollobhpur Mission Hospital - supported by USPG - and has quietly devoted her life to the service of those at their most vulnerable. We see this emphasis on health care in Frank Haji's work in Tanzania and in the role of the Rajshahi Mission Hospital in Bangladesh, used as a treatment centre for Covid-19 patients.

Delene Mark speaks elegantly about the need for the diverse voices of lay people to be heard at the decision-making level of the Church, emphasised by the Church of Ceylon which trains male and female lay leaders who strive to share God's love with their local communities through practical service and prayer. The Anglican Church in Zambia is comprised primarily of people under 25. How should church elders harness the joy and enthusiasm of these devoted lay people, whilst simultaneously sharing their collective wisdom with the leaders of the future?

From his experiential perspective, the Rev'd Lawrence describes 'the backbone of the church not as clergy, but as laity,' whilst Chrispen Gumbs echoes this sentiment, articulating his belief that 'as Christians we have a responsibility to proclaim the Gospel through the encounters we have with others' as he did as both police officer and lay minister.

Dr R Chatoor shares his journey from paediatric medicine to Church Army Evangelist in Jamaica whilst Hannah Shunker's work in the UAE embodies the practical service which lay ministers execute in the most challenging of environments.

I hope you feel you can join me in celebrating the invaluable contribution of this diverse group of remarkable people.

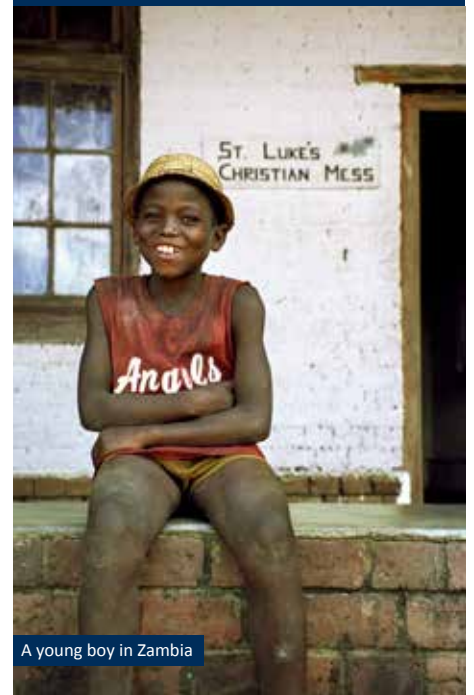
*Duncan Dormor*

The Rev'd Duncan Dormor,  
General Secretary USPG

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# TO WORSHIP ME, FEED MY SHEEP

From Rajshahi Mission Hospital, Bangladesh



**In 2020, Rajshahi Mission Hospital in Bangladesh was requisitioned by the Bangladeshi government for use as a treatment centre for Covid-19 patients. Although we were glad that the hospital could be used to help those suffering with Covid-19, it saddened us to think that our 96-year-old institution no longer belonged to the Church of Bangladesh.**

Thankfully, on 1 February 2021, ownership of the hospital returned to the Church. 1 February was our Lazarus Day, our second chance, and for this we give thanks to God.

Hospital staff are currently working with the Bangladeshi government's Directorate General of Health Services to renew the hospital's medical licence, having successfully renewed the hospital's registration with the Bangladeshi government's NGO Affairs Bureau.

The present Moderator of the Church of Bangladesh, the Rt Rev'd Samuel Mankhin, hopes that the Church, and the Mission Hospital as part of this, can become self-sufficient by 2025.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, we hope to 'build back better', with the aim of becoming a self-sufficient hospital for marginalised communities in Rajshahi. We have recruited a number of specialist doctors and senior nurses who are now working in the hospital.

We are in the process of hiring further physicians, with the aim of employing sufficient staff in order to treat patients within a few hours of their arrival. We have also agreed to supervise student nurses from the nearby Nagar Nursing Institute whilst they complete their practical training at the hospital. This means that we will have a nurse available for every patient who is in need of treatment.

## TO WORSHIP ME, FEED MY SHEEP

Having employed new staff and agreed to host student nurses at Rajshahi Christian Mission Hospital, we are currently pursuing our medical licence from the Bangladeshi government's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The hospital is currently working to ensure quality services and standard diagnostics in the field of healthcare to attract good numbers of doctors and patients. We have improved the operating theatre by purchasing new equipment and have introduced a dental unit, a service that we did not previously provide. We hope to further develop the knowledge and skills of our hospital staff through training courses and formal qualifications.

Rajshahi Christian Mission Hospital is currently pursuing overseas funding opportunities. Small monthly donations from wealthy countries in the global North would help the hospital to stay solvent and able to provide healthcare for patients in the local area. In the last four months, the Poor Fund of this hospital has provided financial assistance to 54 members of the Santal community for various treatments.

We have started working with organisations such as Compassion International Bangladesh, who support children in Rajshahi through the provision of breakfast, after-school and weekend clubs. We are also endeavouring to make sure that those in need of medical treatment know we are open, publishing adverts in local newspapers and distributing posters around Rajshahi, saying: 'We are back and we are here for you again.'

The hospital is actively re-connecting with Priests-in-Charge and Catechists in the Deanery of Rajshahi so that members of church congregations are aware of the services we provide at the hospital. This partnership also gives hospital staff the opportunity to provide first-aid training for church members and to encourage young people in the church to enrol at the Najar Nursing Institute or Rajshahi Medical College. There are also opportunities for young people to learn about medical administration by training at Rajshahi Christian Mission Hospital itself. We offer young people the opportunity to visit different departments of the hospital, learning how to prepare X-rays and ECG reports.

They also have the chance to learn about ophthalmology, pathology and dentistry by

talking to our department experts. By offering training opportunities to young people in the local area, we hope to ensure the hospital has sufficient doctors and nurses in future years. Our efforts to become self-sufficient have started well in 2021. We hope we will be able to encourage local people to use the hospital and to think of it as their hospital. By showing that we can care for them whilst ensuring the future of the hospital, we believe we are following the example of Jesus Christ, our helper and deliverer.

In addition to serving the local community, the hospital receives patients from other nearby areas of Bangladesh such as Mymensingh and Rangpur. The Church of Bangladesh also encourages members of the local Roman Catholic and Baptist communities in Rajshahi to come and be treated at our hospital.

We are currently working to garner increased financial support and the trust of the general public. To do this, the hospital's management team is documenting any financial transactions involving the hospital and trying to be as transparent and accountable as possible. The CEO gives the Chairman of the hospital's medical board daily updates on cash flow. One of our aims for 2021 has been to provide more frequent and accurate financial records, and so far we have achieved this. We also keep extensive records of patient visits to the hospital and home visits conducted by hospital staff.

Everything we do at Rajshahi Christian Mission Hospital is done in the name of God. Each day starts with a morning devotion and prayers. After this, we go to work and live out the Gospel, providing healthcare to the local community in the name of Jesus Christ.

We think that the role of lay people is to proclaim the Gospel in different ways to the traditional preaching of the clergy. One of these ways is through the provision of healthcare, as demonstrated by the work of the Rajshahi Christian Mission Hospital. After all, the best way to proclaim the Gospel is to help your neighbour, rather than 'pass by on the other side'. We also believe that the Church should be self-sufficient, spiritually and financially. Being self-sufficient means that we can continue to care for others by making sure our hospital will be there for them in the future. ■

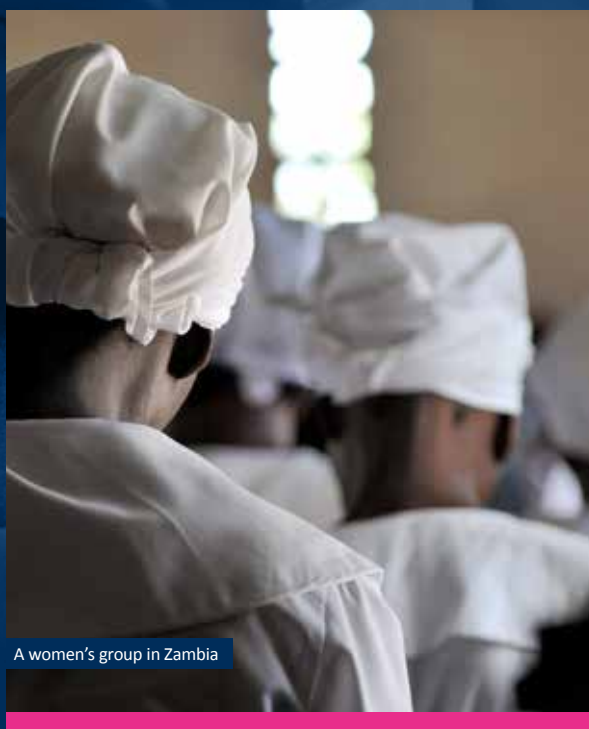


we go to work  
and live out the  
Gospel



# WOMEN AND LAY LEADERSHIP IN ZAMBIA

By Felicia Sakala (Zambia)



A women's group in Zambia

**Greater involvement of women in lay ministry is good for the Church and for its members.**

Women are able to take on leadership roles which have historically belonged to men and churches are able to develop new ministries through the knowledge and talents these lay leaders bring to their roles.

At the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka, there is a Health Outreach ministry comprised mainly of women. This ministry works alongside the Mothers' Union to collect medical supplies, clothing and food; these provisions are then distributed to local communities across the city of Lusaka. The ministry also promotes conversations about the prevention of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Covid-19.

I believe that the increased representation of women amongst lay workers and leaders provides hope for the future. As women are now more involved in church ministries in Zambia, the Church can respond better to women's needs. Many church groups have started to provide economic empowerment programmes for women.

The Women's Fellowship group at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka, Zambia provides training in various skills such as needlecraft, crochet and flower arrangement. This training has enabled women at the church to make and sell their own products, such as facemasks and flowers, which helps them to become more financially independent.

As more women take on lay leadership roles within the Anglican Church in Zambia, we are witnessing the growth of new ministries and the improvement of existing initiatives in churches across the country. Centering women in the lay ministry of the Church has allowed us to hear new voices, which may previously have gone unheard, and to ensure our churches are welcoming to all. We will continue to amplify these voices and to encourage new ideas, which we hope will help the Church to reach out to the people of Zambia. ■

Women's ministry is one of the pillars of the Church. Without women taking on an active role in our churches, I do not believe the Church would be able to function properly. The Anglican Church in Zambia includes many groups where women serve as lay leaders. These include the Mothers' Union, St Veronica's Guild and the Girls' Brigade.

We also have various groups in which women are heavily involved, such as church choirs and youth groups. In the Anglican Church in Zambia, we have recently established a 'Women of Worth' group for young women who require support in spiritual or practical matters.

Outside of these groups, many women are lay leaders in their local churches, engaging with the mission of the Church and actively participating in its spiritual growth.

## A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

By Canon Delene Mark, Director of HOPE Africa



Photo: Delene Mark

Before I took on my current role as Director of HOPE Africa, I was a layperson in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa for many decades. When I was a child in the Church, I initially thought that most of the laity were there to fill the pews and the collection plates. As a daughter of a churchwarden and an altar server, I became aware that there were some church leadership roles occupied by the laity: being on parish council, leading the choir, teaching in Sunday School and serving at the Eucharist. Unfortunately for me, my parents' involvement in the Church meant that every Saturday was spent in church, cleaning the floors, polishing the brass, and preparing the altar for Sunday services. It also meant staying late after church on Sunday while the collection was counted and everyone else had gone home.

These days, I have a much deeper understanding of the critical role of laity in the life of the church in ensuring that God's mission is achieved in the world. My time as Campus Organiser for the Anglican Students Federation at the University of Cape Town played a significant part in changing my view of the laity. From this experience, I developed a strong belief that the diverse voices of lay people need to be heard at decision-making levels in the Church. Otherwise, we will find it incredibly difficult to make the Church relevant to the needs of God's people. In South Africa, laity were instrumental in leading peace and justice movements within the Church. These movements helped steer the country to the end of apartheid and its first democratic elections in 1994. Organisations working within the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, such as the Mothers' Union and the St Bernard Mizeki Men's Guild, are fundamental to fundraising efforts and outreach initiatives. These groups, which help sustain both financial support for and public interest in the Church, are led and coordinated by lay people.

In provinces across the Anglican Communion, the Church is led by the episcopacy and governed by synods. This means that Bishops, Priests, and lay people come together to map out the future direction of the Church. In some instances, the House of Bishops and Clergy seem to have more power in decision-making processes. However, the House of Laity is filled with members who possess diverse skills and knowledge.

These attributes are equally needed to inform decisions made by the Church and so I believe that the voice of the laity should be given equal weighting to the opinions of the clergy. In any diocese you could have laity who are trained in financial management, law, communications and education. Many of these skills are not possessed by ordained clergy. To be truly effective in living out God's to the world, the Church needs to harness these skills. Working together, ordained clergy and lay people can spread the Church's messages of redemption and hope.

In the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, many lay people like me occupy senior leadership positions. Such roles involve coordinating a variety of initiatives. Some of the schemes I run focus on social development, leadership training and addressing gender-based violence. I have colleagues who focus on healthcare initiatives, raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and training communities to prevent Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Laity involved in coordinating these programmes have the relevant educational qualifications, skills and experience to enable the Church to serve God as best it can. The laity have also been a part of the process of churches reaching out into communities. As lay people, we do not administer the sacraments in church services but instead we take the Church into the world. Ordained clergy and lay people should work together to grow the Church whilst also seeking the transformation of the world into a more peaceful and just place.

Many people may think that the laity only support the work of the Church through financial contributions and infrequent volunteering. This perception is misguided, as lay people are fundamental to the work of the Church. The laity has a vital role in creating a vision for the mission work of the Church as well as the skills and knowledge to implement this vision. ■



laity were there to fill the pews and fill the collection plates

# THE GRACE OF UNTIDINESS

By Dr Clare Amos (Diocese in Europe)

Across the Anglican Communion, there is a certain untidiness to lay ministry. This untidiness shows itself in a variety of ways, of which terminology is an obvious example.

In England the most widely recognised lay role is that of the Reader, who are increasingly called licensed lay ministers. But in some other parts of the Anglican Communion the role of Reader is much more restricted than in England, or the term is not used at all. In many parts of Africa and Asia, Anglicans refer to lay ministers as Catechists, whose title suggests that their original focus was as teachers of the catechism. Nowadays the role of Catechists is seen as that of a lay pastor, leading worship, ministering with pre-consecrated elements of bread and wine and caring for the wellbeing of the local Christian community. Experience as a catechist is often a prerequisite if one is to be considered for possible ordination to the priesthood.

The nature of lay ministry across the Anglican Communion is linked to the role of women in the church. In some Anglican churches, being a lay minister is the only option for women who desire to be ordained as deacons or priests. This is unfortunate, as it both limits the role of women in the church and takes the focus away from those who are specifically called to lay ministry. In England in the 1980s, women could be made deaconesses, but at the time could not be ordained as either deacons or priests. The ministry of deaconess was formally a 'lay ministry', but there was no clear difference in what they did compared to the ordained ministry of male deacons.

Another question about lay ministry is its focus. Is the task of the lay minister to support the

worshipping life of the Church, keeping services going, particularly in the absence of a priest? Or is the task of the lay minister to build bridges between the life of the Church and the secular world?

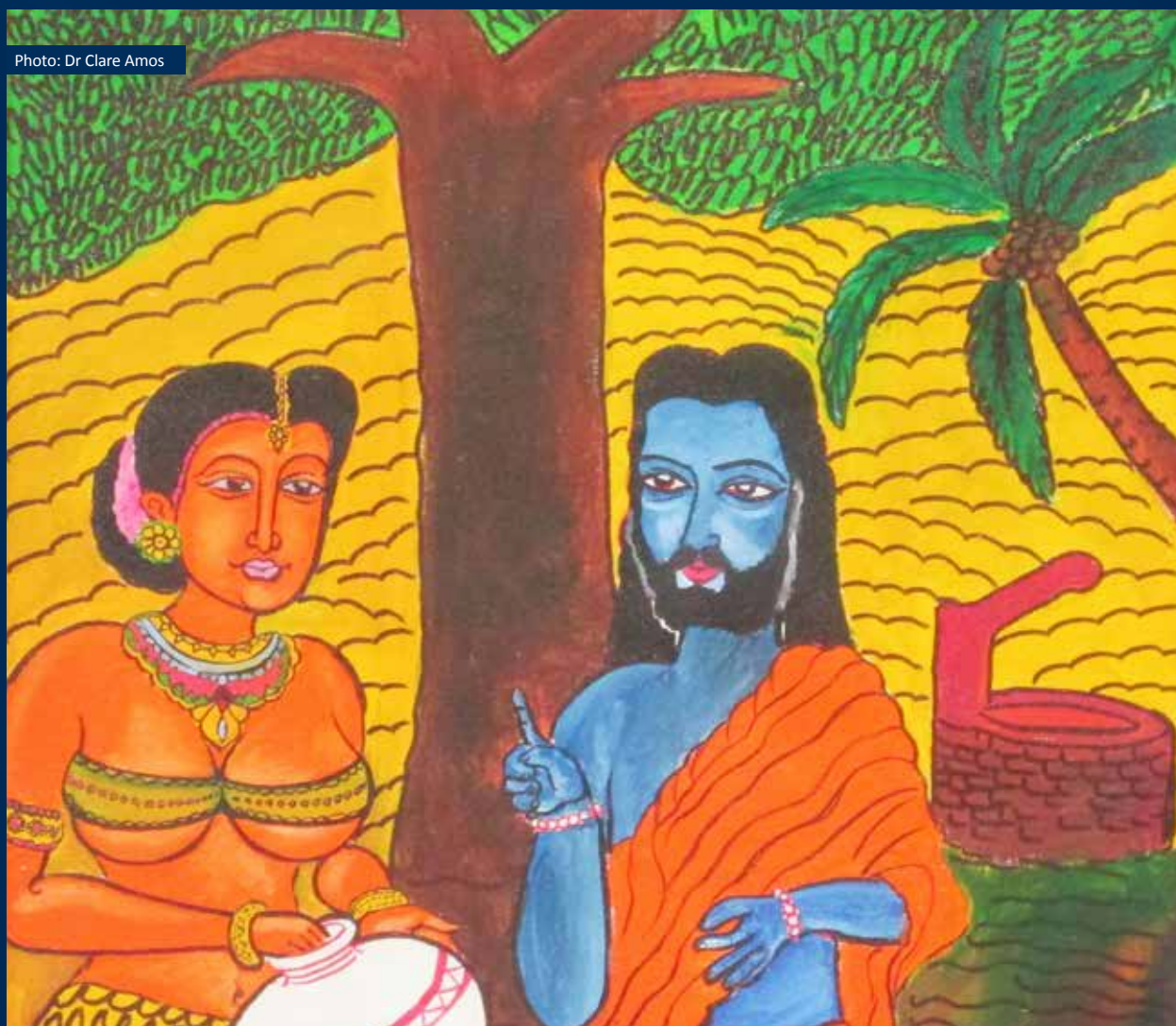
There is also the question of payment. Usually, lay ministers are not paid for their duties. However, that is not an absolute rule, and there are parts of the Anglican Communion where Catechists receive support, possibly not in cash but in kind. Does being paid by the church in some way make one less lay? This is a question that I have had to ask myself from time to time. I think of myself as a 'lay theologian', and I have not sought ordination, nor licensing as a Reader. In terms of church structure, I have a formal commission from the Bishop in Europe as 'Honorary Director of Lay Discipleship' in the Diocese. Though now officially retired, I have worked for a variety of church institutions throughout my life, including as Theological Resource Officer at USPG, and my pension derives mainly from church-related sources. Does that disqualify me from being a proper lay person?

It is important to me that I am lay. Part of my vocation is to be gently questioning and subversive of the structures and practices of the institutional Church – which is easier to do if one is not bound by the constraints of ordination. It hasn't always felt a comfortable role to hold, but such a position of critical friend ought to be part of the role of the lay minister, whether or not they are formally licensed.

My personal ideal of what lay ministers should express and represent is two-fold. Firstly, they should represent the valuing of lay ministry



Photo: Dr Clare Amos



in its own right, rather than as a stepping-stone towards ordination. As part of this, they should challenge ordained clergy to work collaboratively and constructively with lay people. Secondly, they should represent a desire to facilitate a conversation between the institutional world of the Church and the secular world in which most people, including Christians, go about their lives. The repeated affirmation of Genesis 1, that 'God saw that it was good', is a vital reminder that God's goodness operates throughout the whole of creation – not just the 'church part'. However, I recognise that I am writing from a privileged position, and that those 'ideals' may not be realistic in certain geographical, ecclesiastical or economic contexts.

The Biblical figure that models lay ministry best in my eyes is the woman that Jesus met at the well of Samaria (John 4.5-42). She is unnamed in the Bible, but in Christian tradition is called Photini ('the enlightened one'). She brought to her encounter with Jesus all the sorrows and learnings of a life that had clearly been very difficult. They were part of what she offered. She ministered to Jesus, with her practical response to his

request for a drink, and she allowed him to minister to her. She helped to break down boundaries, in her case between Jews and Samaritans. She listened and learned as Jesus challenged religious orthodoxies about 'holy places'. She is the recipient of the first occasion when Jesus discloses his divine identity: 'I am, the one who is speaking to you' (John 4.26).

She clearly discomforted the norms of the official church (that is to say, the apostles): 'They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman' (John 4.27). She acted as an extraordinarily effective missionary to her own people: 'Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony' (John 4.39). And finally, she was typically under-valued for her vital contribution to changing their lives! (John 4.42).

Archbishop Michael Ramsey said, 'To be a theologian is to be exposed to the vision of heaven and the tragedies of humanity'. The woman of Samaria was such a theologian, and offers a powerful model for lay ministers 2000 years later. She followed Jesus, prepared for the cost of it, and was undeterred. ■

## GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

By Hannah Tirzer Shunker, the United Arab Emirates

St Martin of Tours famously said, 'Lord, if your people need me, I will not refuse this work. Your will be done.' I believe that the most important thing we did at St. Martin's Anglican Church during the pandemic was tend to the 'needs' of people around us. Thanks to the wisdom and quick planning of political and religious leaders in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), strict lockdown measures were put in place towards the end of March 2020. Despite the caution showed by those in charge, the country continues to be affected by the Covid-19 pandemic: over 560,000 cases of Covid-19 have been identified so far. Many of the wealthier citizens of the UAE have been able to isolate in their homes throughout the pandemic. Poorer members of society, such as the cleaners, builders and drivers who help to construct and maintain this beautiful land, have suffered greatly because of the pandemic.



Photo: Hannah Tirzer Shunker

Many of these workers are migrants from other countries who live just above the poverty line. The Migrant Labour Ministry at St Martin's Anglican Church helps these individuals. The past year has been very difficult for these migrant labourers, as many of them have lost their jobs or have not been paid for several months. To meet the emotional and spiritual needs of the migrant labourers, ministry volunteers and church staff conduct online services and meetings via Zoom and WhatsApp on a regular basis. In response to their physical needs, church members rally together to provide basic supplies, donating flour, lentils, oil, eggs and other essentials. Some of these food parcels are distributed to security guards and daily wage workers on the streets around the church, as we believe our responsibility is not just to Christians, but to all in need. We serve these brothers and sisters with joy, knowing that whatever we do for the least of them we are

doing for God. We also reach out to people in other Emirates, sending food provisions to our friends at St Luke's Anglican Church in Ras Al Khaimah, 55 miles away from Sharjah.

At the start of the pandemic, facemasks were scarce and often much too expensive for less affluent members of the local community to buy. This issue prompted a small group of parishioners to start producing reusable masks for the community. St. Martin's Clothing Ministry also serves as an outreach platform for our church: clothes are donated by our parishioners and subsequently distributed to those in need at no cost. In addition to serving the local community, St Martin's continues to provide spiritual and practical assistance to our congregation. Online services, meetings and activities for young people were initiated as soon as churches were closed during the first lockdown and continue to this day.

Unfortunately, some of our church members have been infected by Covid-19 during the pandemic. To help them, we produce and deliver meals, leaving them on their doorsteps, and pray for them regularly. Many members of the congregation have been affected by the economic impact of the pandemic either, in job losses and salary cuts. St Martin's provides financial aid to our church members through our church pastoral fund.

At the start of 2020, the Rev'd Fr Drew Wayne Schmotzer, Chaplain and Parish Priest of St Martin's, said that it would be a year of 'God's faithfulness.' Though no one could have imagined what would follow in 2020, the faithfulness of God was unmistakable! God's faithfulness gave us hope, peace and the strength to shine His light through the darkness and bless others in His name. The following passage from Lamentations has given me much comfort over the last year: 'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness' (Lamentations 3:22-23). Our theme for 2021 is 'Praise' and we have been encouraged to find a different verse to help us remember this. I chose the following verse from Hebrews, which reminds me of God's steadfastness and call in our lives: 'Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased' (Hebrews 13:15-16). ■



our responsibility  
is not just to  
Christians, but to  
all in need



## GOD-GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES

By Dr Russell Chatoor (Diocese of Jamaica)



Dr Russell Chatoor (third from left)  
with Bishop Howard Gregory (centre)

In Jamaica, which has a population of less than three million, 62% of the population identify as Protestant but only 4% identify as Anglican. In the Diocese of Jamaica, we have insufficient Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and a high attrition rate for both clergy and congregants. The need for the laity to take on greater responsibility and to become more involved in the Church has never been more urgent. Romans 12:4-6 reminds us: 'In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others'. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. Using our varied gifts, our mission is to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world, taking our place in the life, worship and governance of the Church.

The turning point in my faith was in 1981. In my final year of postgraduate studies in paediatrics, I became gravely ill with a severe haemorrhagic disorder. I was unconscious and unresponsive to all therapies for two weeks. In my unconscious state I said, 'Lord, if you save me, I will serve you.' I recovered and went on to become a paediatric cardiologist. With God's guidance, I have helped establish cardiac surgical care in Jamaica for over 3,000 children with congenital heart disease. The main focus of my ministry is to guide patients,

fellow doctors and healthcare workers to love and trust in the Lord. Patients and their families are more receptive to God's love when they are speaking with someone they know and trust, and medical staff are a good example of this.

As a Church Army Associate Evangelist, I have the privilege and responsibility of sharing God's word and love with people in different settings and circumstances. I am also a member of the Brotherhood of St Andrew, which aims to bring men to Christ. In doing so, the Brotherhood seeks to care for the spiritual, mental and social welfare of its members. The Brotherhood's three-fold pledge of Prayer, Study and Service are at the heart of our mission work.

Another outreach project I am involved in is The Parenting Place in Kingston. This initiative focuses on providing educational resources, healthcare advice and parenting skills for new parents. I believe this programme helps people to experience God's purpose and place in their lives. I offer my paediatric expertise as an advisor for this initiative. The work of the laity in the church's ministry is vital to its effectiveness. We are all called to play our part, using the time, talents and opportunities given to us by God. ■



We are all called to  
play our part



# THE VOCATION OF THE LAITY

**By the Most Rev'd James Wong, Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean**

**I have recently observed a dramatic change in the Anglican Church of Indian Ocean, with the laity of the Church taking on a greater role in church life.**

I believe the reason for this development is an increased number of opportunities to train as a lay minister and a greater focus on lay ministry in church services. The Bible is clear that all of God's people are called to serve His purpose and glory. This means that all Christians are ministers of God. While God calls all Christians to serve Him, He calls them to serve in different areas, contexts, and roles.

In the past, training within the Church has focused on the Eucharist as the central act of worship. This emphasises the importance of the presiding priest, whilst failing to acknowledge the role of the laity. Whilst we should still recognise the significance of the Eucharist, the training provided by the Church needs to be more inclusive, encompassing a greater breadth of ministry. Lay leadership and ministry must be seen as a calling from God, recognised, nurtured and celebrated by the Church; it should not be regarded as a poor substitute for priestly ministry when clergy are not available. I also

believe that it is important for lay people to meet with lay ministers from other parts of the Province of the Indian Ocean and perhaps even from other parts of the Anglican Communion. Such meetings would provide mutual inspiration and encouragement. If we are to truly integrate the laity into the work of the Church, we must recognise lay ministers as a distinct group within the Church and actively foster collaboration between lay leaders.

The importance of lay ministry in some of our dioceses should not be underestimated. In the Diocese of Mahajanga, Madagascar, eight full-time priests and two part-time priests are responsible for more than 30 churches spread over a vast area. Some of these churches are as far as 100 km apart from each other and only accessible in certain weather conditions. The Rt Rev'd Samuel Hall Speers, Bishop of the Diocese of Mahajanga, says that the strength of the churches in the diocese relies primarily on voluntary Catechists.

## THE VOCATION OF THE LAITY

The Diocese of Toamasina, also in Madagascar, is even larger: this diocese has 300 churches, but only 17 members of clergy. Most of the churches are maintained by Catechists and evangelists who lead services and preach the Word of God to the local community. Without these lay people, the Church could not survive.

The Diocese of Toliara, Madagascar, is a wonderful example of the fruit of lay ministry. Anglicans in Toliara started gathering together in 1971, the first Anglican church in Toliara was founded in 1999 and the Diocese of Toliara was officially formed in 2013. For the first 17 years of its existence, from 1971 to 1988, the Anglican community in Toliara had no ordained clergy, consisting solely of lay people. To spread the Gospel during that time, the community trained evangelists to lead prayers and initiate community outreach.

In 2009, St Patrick's Bible College was established in the diocese to train evangelists and Catechists. In 2021, the Diocese of Toliara, now comprised of 104 churches, is served by 16 lay evangelists and 10 members of clergy. The diocese relies on lay people to survive. Consequently, the importance of lay people in the life of the Church is better understood there, and in the other dioceses in Madagascar, than it is in areas with more clergy and fewer churches.

Across the Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean, we seek to model 'evangelism through discipleship'. This primarily involves evangelists going out into local communities and providing basic services for small groups of people. These services consist of songs and Bible readings but lack a liturgical component. Lay people also hold services in local churches as there are very few ordained in relation to the number of churches. In the Diocese of Toliara, 88 out of 104 churches have regular services provided by evangelists and Catechists rather than members of the clergy.

In 2019, the Diocese started a training programme to teach the meaning and application of discipleship in local contexts. This programme is run by lay leaders for members of the Church, under the supervision of trained evangelists and members of clergy. Outside of regular church services and specific training programmes, lay people also participate and lead Mothers' Union groups, Sunday School lessons, youth groups, and both men's and women's ministries. These various activities demonstrate how much time and energy the laity contribute to the life of the Church.

I believe that lay ministry is crucial to both the survival and flourishing of the Church. Lay people are like John the Baptist, pointing the way to Christ. To improve and sustain the vibrant lay ministry we have in the Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean, we need to foster further collaboration between different elements of the lay ministry. For example, connecting a women's ministry to a Mothers' Union. By working together, different ministries within the Church will be able to reach more people.

Lay ministry is not only practically necessary, but also theologically important. In the Bible, all baptised Christians are called to serve God and the Church. In the region of the Indian Ocean, we have witnessed this call first-hand. Currently, the most important role in the church of Indian Ocean is the role of the laity, as they collectively serve a greater number of people than our ordained clergy possibly can. Whilst acknowledging and maintaining the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the Church, our experience in the Province of the Indian Ocean has shown that church services without the Eucharist can also make new disciples. Our lay leaders centre the Word of God, rather than the Eucharist, in church services. The Word of God taught and preached by lay ministers has helped to encourage, plant and develop communities without Priests. ■

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Without these lay people, the Church could not survive



Church in Faravohitra, Madagascar

## FROM LAITY TO CLERGY

By the Rev'd Fr Micheal Lawrence (Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago)

I served as a Youth Worker in the Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago for many years before I was ordained as a Priest. During my time as a member of the lay ministry, I discovered that the backbone of the Church is not the clergy but the laity, who serve in a wide range of roles and ministries. The diverse range of contributions that lay people make help to keep the Church alive.

Lay ministry is practised throughout the Church calendar, not just on Sundays. Specific aspects of lay ministry are preparing churches for visitors, administering church finances, coordinating children's activities and assisting the clergy in their service preparation. Clergy provide theological insight, leadership qualities and pastoral care yet it is often lay people who implement the ideas and plans formulated by clergy.

Before my ordination, I considered myself as a devout layperson, and I have been a communicant in good standing since my baptism. I began to serve the Church at an early age. I assisted my grandmother with church cleaning duties at weekends, served as a leader of the church's youth group, sang in the church choir and participated in the vestry harvest festival committee. During my time as a layperson, I was given nicknames such as church-mouse, youth-man and Mr President. These nicknames came about because I was always present at church activities. I have served God both on and off the altar and have dealt with difficult situations within the life of the Church. In these tough situations, I think of Jesus' comforting words to the disciples: 'Do not let your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me' (John 14:1).

From a young age, I have felt the desire to serve God. During my time as a layperson in the Church, this flame in my heart continued to grow. Eventually, I decided to study for the ministry at Codrington Theological College, Barbados. This involved leaving my job and moving away from my family, but I knew it was the right path to take. I was ordained as a Deacon in the Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago in 2020 and then to the priesthood in 2021. I have not found the transition from laity to clergy particularly difficult. I believe this is because I was trained and mentored for years by the Rector who presided at our church. The Rector would assign me to serve at weekend services and committee meetings. He also taught me



how to engage with issues such as marriage and funeral counselling. This process helped me to discern that ordained ministry was my calling.

As a Priest, I subscribe to the concept of *Total Ministry*: lay and ordained ministry alike play important roles in the functions of the Church, with the Church needing a diverse range of ministries to survive. Such ministries include Mothers' Union and single parents groups, the church choir, the church youth group and our community sports teams. However, I am starting to notice distinct differences between lay and ordained ministry. When a lay minister encounters issues within the Church, they are able to consult churchwardens or speak to the clergy. When a Deacon or Priest faces a problem, they are required to solve this by themselves. Although there are chairpersons of particular committees, the buck stops with the priest. I do not believe that the Church is overly reliant on ordained clergy, but the clergy are inevitably accountable for what happens inside their churches.

As I grow and develop into priestly parish ministry, I am able to use and reflect on the lessons I learnt from lay ministry. I am still a relatively young person and my experiences as a youth leader have taught me a lot about relating to young people. I put this experience into practice as I encourage young people in Trinidad and Tobago to come along and participate in the life of the Church. Bringing people of all ages to God is vital to the life of the Church.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve God as a young cleric, using the experience I gained as a layperson. I thank all those, ordained and lay, who have helped me to find my path. I pray that my ministry is pleasing to God and that I am playing my part in bringing new believers into the Kingdom of God. ■



the backbone of the Church is not the clergy but the laity



## FAITH AS A FOUNDATION

Bollobhpur Mission Hospital is situated in the Diocese of Kushtia, in the Church of Bangladesh. USPG supports the hospital by providing funds to meet running costs and train nurses. In 2020, 31 students at Bollobhpur qualified to be nurses and 27 new students began to study for their nursing qualifications. The staff at Bollobhpur delivered over 500 babies and treated over 1500 patients in the hospital, whilst over 10,000 people from the local area were treated in the weekly village clinics over the course of 2020.

Sister Gillian Rose is the Medical Director of Bollobhpur Mission Hospital and has been working at Bollobhpur over the last 50 years. She said,

‘When I first came to Bangladesh, it was not actually Bangladesh yet – it was East Pakistan. I moved from England to Bangladesh in 1964, first working at St Anne’s Medical Centre in Barisal, run by the Oxford Mission. I came to work at Bollobhpur Mission Hospital in 1981, replacing staff from the Church Mission Society, which had previously administered the hospital. Apart from a visit home to London in the late 1980s, I have been here ever since’.

Sister Gillian attributes her longevity at the hospital to the unique role it plays in the local area. ‘My faith is the basis of all I do, and faith is the foundation of the hospital’s work too. We are a Christian hospital, and we serve in Christian witness in the community. The hospital is the centre of the local community. We provide three village clinics a week, visiting villages within a radius of 11 miles of the hospital – right up to the border between India and Bangladesh. As well as providing medical care for patients, we offer prayer and the administering of sacraments if patients wish to receive them. There are many private clinics operating in the local area, some with medical licenses and some without. However, none provide the spiritual care that Bollobhpur does’.

Over the last year, hospitals across the world have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Sister Gillian said, ‘We are fortunate that Covid-19 has not spread to the Bollobhpur Mission Hospital, and we continue to be cautious, wearing personal protective equipment at all times. We are proud that we haven’t had any Covid-19 cases so far due to the care that our staff have taken to protect themselves, and our patients, from the virus.



Student nurses at Bollobhpur

Unfortunately, the pandemic has meant that some of the older staff at the hospital have not been able to assist in the running of village clinics, as we want to protect them from catching the virus. The biggest effect that the pandemic has had is on our students. The Bangladeshi government imposed a national lockdown from 26th March 2020. Before the lockdown came into effect, 20 of our nursing students left the hospital to go back to the villages where their families live. However, 86 of our nursing students remained at Bollobhpur, continuing their training throughout the lockdown’.

In addition to the effect that Covid-19 has had on the number of students training at Bollobhpur, the pandemic has also affected church life in the area. Sister Gillian said, ‘Before the Covid-19 pandemic, all of the staff at Bollobhpur would attend Sunday services together at Immanuel Church, which lies adjacent to the hospital. During the pandemic, the church has been closed. Instead, we use the hospital chapel for worship each morning, and every Friday the hospital chaplain leads a Holy Communion service. We are glad we have been able to use the chapel throughout the pandemic, but we are looking forward to Immanuel opening again – it will be a cause for celebration!’. She added, ‘We are very grateful for USPG’s support, as they accompany us in our work. USPG have been here for us when no one else has. We continue to pray for USPG’s work across the world and ask that USPG prays for us here in Bollobhpur’.



faith is the  
foundation of the  
hospital’s work

# LONG ENOUGH AT THIS MOUNTAIN

By Juliet Gosling-Brown

Kirstenbosch Gardens, South Africa  
Photo: Juliet Gosling-Brown



Having sat on the fence about religion until my mid-thirties, I came to faith in 1996. This was the result of curiosity, a fear of death and my godmother persuading me to enrol in an Alpha Course at Holy Trinity Brompton Church, London.

In 2003, my vicar in Wandsworth put me in touch with a Vocations Chaplain who suggested

I travel overseas and experience the Anglican Church in another culture. I attended a retreat at Hilfield Friary, a Franciscan Community in Dorset, to explore this idea further. I was guided by various clergy, including a retired Franciscan Brother who suggested I apply to travel with USPG, as he had previously done.

I applied to the Experience Exchange Programme (EEP), attended a USPG Discernment Weekend, and I was accepted. This is where my journey with USPG began. I remember praying to God, saying 'I will do anything you want me to do'. This may have been a risky thing to say but I finished the weekend filled with joy. After all of this, the writing was on the wall: I needed to travel overseas with USPG.

In November 2005, I spent ten days in Birmingham, training with 18 other participants on the EEP. In December 2005, I left my fundraising job at Marie Curie Cancer Care. I achieved my fundraising target of £5,000 for the placement within a week, which I took as another sign of God's plan.

I travelled to Cape Town, South Africa in January 2006 for a six-month placement at St Mark's Anglican Church in District Six, an area of the city notorious for its apartheid history.

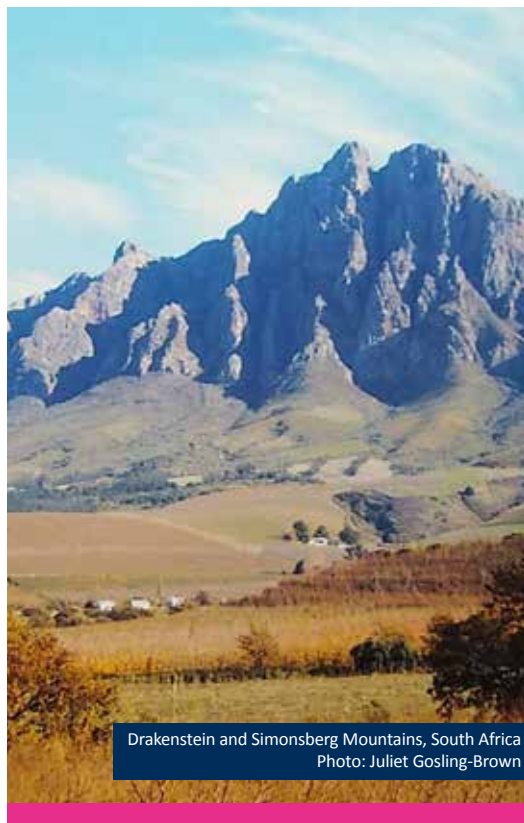
It felt like God had put everything in place for the journey ahead. I met people in unexpected places, such as funerals and New Year's Eve parties, who gave me contacts to aid my role as Fundraiser for St Mark's Church. My pastorate



## LONG ENOUGH AT THIS MOUNTAIN

group of 60 prayed for me whilst I was in Cape Town, as I was often in fear of my safety there.

My placement was supervised by Father John Oliver, a former USPG missionary, who sadly died in 2012. Father John assigned a man called Doug Brown to work with me in fundraising for St Marks and together we raised R1.5M, the equivalent of around £78,000, which helped to save the church from closure. Over time I became good friends with Doug. Initially, I was concerned that a relationship during my placement was not part of God's plan. However, the friendship grew and Doug came back to the UK with me. We returned to live in South Africa and married each other at St Mark's Church in March 2008. I felt God had ordained our meeting and marriage.



Drakenstein and Simonsberg Mountains, South Africa  
Photo: Juliet Gosling-Brown

In September 2011, Doug died suddenly of a heart attack; I felt my life was shattered. I would not have coped but for the overwhelming presence of God. My six months in South Africa with USPG were the most enriching days of my life, which I would not have experienced if I had not taken God's guidance to go. I experienced God's clear provision and tangible protection on many occasions, even when threatened by muggers.

While in South Africa, I continually felt a 'nudge'

towards exploring ordination. At one retreat, where I could see the amazing Table Mountain from my window, Deuteronomy 1:1-6 spoke to me: 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain'. On reflection, the entire experience seem part of the preparation for considering ordination. My friends, including atheists, agnostics and fellow Christians, said I would make a brilliant vicar! Yet, I was not completely convinced.

Once I returned to England in 2013, my vicar put me in touch with a vocation chaplain. I joined my local 'Christianity Explored' course and later an ordination course, feeling excited yet still inadequate. I took encouragement in John Pritchard's seminal book, 'The Life & Work of a Priest': 'God is more interested in the heart of the Priest than in his or her CV'.

The Director of Ordinands (DDO) in the Diocese of Bath & Wells met me and the formal ordination discernment process started. At the same time, I felt drawn towards care work, and wondered what God was doing. I was out of my comfort zone, challenged with death and dementia and distress, yet I was at peace.

My interview with the examining chaplains went well, then came my meeting with the Bishop of Bath and Wells. It wasn't what I expected. I was asked 'Why priesthood?' and recommended to postpone my meeting with the Bishops' Advisory Panel (BAP). I felt disappointed and lost. God seemed silent.

I stopped my discernment process and went to South Africa for guidance from clergy friends. Whilst there, I was encouraged to consider a 'Distinctive Deacon' role. When I eventually attended my BAP in September 2017, I was a nervous wreck. I was accepted and started my ordination training at Sarum College, Salisbury.

I found the ordination course extremely challenging. I was only able to complete my training due to the support and love of my mother and my close friends, as well as encouragement from fellow students and my tutors. This has not been an easy journey, but it helped me find my path. 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' (Jeremiah 29:11).

I started my curacy on 1st July 2021 at St Andrew's, Wiveliscombe and the Seven Towers in the Wivey Hills. My ordination will take place on the 25th September 2021 at Wells Cathedral. ■



God had put everything in place for the journey ahead



# A BEAUTIFUL NEST

From the Church of Ceylon



Photo: Church of Ceylon

It is important to remember that Jesus' disciples were not alone in the early Church. They were supported by many lay people: '3000 were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need' (Acts 2: 41-45). The witnessing life of the believers in the early Church challenges lay ministers to fully devote themselves to the Church, contributing to the life of the Church in their own ways and supporting clergy too.

Sri Lanka is a religiously diverse country, comprised of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians. In Sri Lankan schools, children are taught about the different

traditions and practices within each of these religions. By teaching our young people about different beliefs and cultures, we hope to foster an increasingly tolerant society, where people are aware of and respectful of various religious beliefs. Curiosity towards religion, and Christianity in particular, offers members of the Church of Ceylon valuable opportunities to share their faith with those outside of the Church.

The Church of Ceylon trains male and female lay leaders, respectively called Devasevakas and Devasevikas. These leaders strive to share God's love with their local communities, through practical service and prayer.

I often think of the Church of Ceylon as a bird's nest.

A nest can be beautifully constructed whilst still offering warmth and comfort to those who settle there. A bird's nest is made up of various types of string and other materials, woven carefully together. Just as a bird's nest is comprised of various materials, the Church is comprised of a wide variety of people with different ideas and from different backgrounds. Yet these people are connected together by the love of Jesus Christ. There may be arguments and differences between members of the Church, but our love for each other, regardless of our opinions and origins, remains.

As lay people, we are called to carry the light of love and the warm welcome of Jesus Christ to those who are in need and those who need to be loved. The mission of lay people in today's church is to build relationships between those within and those outside of the Church. To do this, we must share God's love through our actions. Whether this is through pastoral conversation or the provision of food and medicine, we are called to share the love of Jesus Christ with the world. By doing so, we hope to welcome new members, with their own stories and ideas, into our nest. ■

## LIFE OF THE LAITY

By Frank Haji (Tanzania)



In 2008, I was employed by the Anglican Church of Tanzania as a Health Programme Officer. Having worked in the Church for 13 years now, I am one of the longest-serving staff members in our national office in Dodoma; I have worked under four General Secretaries and four Archbishops! When I applied for a job within the Anglican Church of Tanzania, my primary motivation was simply to earn an income – much like it would be in any other job outside the Church. As I began to work for the Church, my personal philosophy with regard to financial matters and life as a whole started to change. Gradually, I saw that life is not about how much money you earn, but rather about how you can help to change the lives of others for better. An important part of doing this is sharing the love of God with others and helping them to establish a relationship with God.

This change in my approach to life came about in response to a number of experiences. My work in the Church has enabled me to travel across Tanzania, visiting many parts of the country which I had never seen before. My job has even given me opportunities to travel to other countries, particularly within Africa. These experiences allowed me made to socialise with many different people from different walks of life, from villagers in rural communities to Bishops in major cities. In these meetings, I learned a lot about how different we all are but also what connects us all. I came to fully understand that we are all made in the image of God, and this helped me to care for strangers in a way I had not known before.

As I coordinate the healthcare programmes of the Anglican Church of Tanzania, I am able to work with and help a true cross-section of society. Healthcare is important for everyone, including those with much wealth and those with very little money. The healthcare sector in Tanzania faces many challenges, particularly underfunding and staffing issues. Over my 13 years working for the Church, I have become increasingly sympathetic to those suffering with medical issues; the more patients I talk

to, the better I understand the challenges they face and how health is linked to income and resources. Many patients suffer from diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, which can be easily prevented if we put the correct systems and procedures in place. The conversations I have with these patients inspire me to excel at my work, and to develop and coordinate health programmes for the Anglican Church of Tanzania that meet the needs of as many people as possible. Through my work, I am able to make a concrete difference to the lives of those in hospitals and communities across Tanzania.

As a lay worker, I believe that my work in the Anglican Church of Tanzania is about representing Christ in the world and particularly in Tanzania. My journey from outside the Church to the heart of its work has made me realise that I have a responsibility to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to everyone that I meet. I am able to travel across Tanzania to oversee the Church's healthcare programmes and run training sessions and workshops. I do not believe I would have had such valuable opportunities if I had chosen to pursue ordained ministry. If I had become a Priest, I would have served in a particular parish, caring for a small number of people in a limited area. Serving as a lay worker in the Church has given me the great advantage of touching the lives of many people across Tanzania, rather than working with a specific community.

To truly flourish as a Church, I believe that laity and clergy must work with each other. Ordained ministers and lay workers operate in different contexts, using skills relevant to the people they work with and care for. However, we should embrace this difference rather than use it to separate us from each other. We have all been given talents by God, and we should work together to use these talents effectively, serving as many people as possible. Lay and ordained, we are all made in the image of God. ■



St Luke's Hospital in Milo, Tanzania

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Lay and ordained,  
we are all made in  
the image of God



# FRONTLINE WORKERS



Erskine Thompson

**By Erskine Thompson (Diocese of Barbados)**

**The structure and procedures of the Anglican Church are characterised by hierarchy. This can lead to the stifling of free expression within church communities and the limiting of opportunities for church members to share their God-given talents.**

Hierarchy within the Church often disadvantages lay people – members of the Church with valuable contributions to give are marginalised simply because they have not been ordained. However, the pause in church life brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic may lead to a paradigm shift in how the churches treat their lay people, whom I believe are the ‘frontline workers’ of the Church.

Since lockdown restrictions within the Diocese of Barbados meant congregations could not gather for church services, the role of lay people in the Church became more important. With churches closed, clergy and church members went out together into local communities to provide pastoral support and dispense sacraments. Lay people have also played an active role in combating misinformation surrounding the safety of Covid-19 vaccines, taking time to encourage church members to get vaccinated.

The dispensation of the sacraments is a contentious issue within the division of labour between clergy and lay ministers. In the Church in the Province of the West Indies, there is disagreement over the criteria allowing church members to dispense the sacraments – whether the privilege of this duty is limited to those who have been ordained or whether it is open to lay people too. However, the permission to dispense sacraments is given to Catechists, Lay Readers and Eucharistic Ministers in situations

where clergy are unavailable. Determining who is allowed to preach is a less contentious issue, despite the possibility of lay people preaching outside of or against church doctrine.

While clergy bring theological expertise to the worship life of the Church, the preaching and leadership skills of lay people should not be ignored. I believe the preaching ability of the laity should be better utilised in the Church, and that opportunities for lay people to preach should be at the centre of the post-pandemic ‘new normal’. As a long-serving member of All Souls Anglican Church, I am often invited by clergy from across the Diocese of Barbados to lead prayers and Bible study groups, and to provide spiritual reflections in church services. These experiences have exposed me to the scriptural and intellectual challenges of preaching without theological training. Whilst this can be an intimidating experience, I believe that more lay people should have the opportunity to preach. If they are not provided with such opportunities then the Church may be deprived of talented lay preachers.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul writes: ‘For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe’ (Corinthians 1:21). Rather than focusing on the wise, the powerful or those of noble birth, God chose those who believe. The life of the Church



## FRONTLINE WORKERS

should reflect this, including all believers, rather than limiting opportunities to those who are the most qualified. In 1954, the World Council of Churches stated, 'The time has come to make the ministry of the laity explicit, visible and active in the world. The real battles of the faith today are being fought in factories, shops, offices, and farms, in political parties and government agencies, in homes and in the media'. From a Methodist perspective, Walter Fenton wrote that, 'John Wesley recognised what many in the Church of England failed to see. Without a broad base of faithful, fervent and committed lay people, a church is always in danger of living off its glories and becoming an insular and self-serving institution'. I suggest that these comments are relevant to the present-day Anglican Church; we must embrace the passion and purpose of lay people in our churches if we are to reach out and serve the wider world.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Parish of St George in the Diocese of Barbados organised a series of online discussions focused on the role of lay people in the Church. This was part of an effort to engage, educate and empower church members who were living under lockdown restrictions or in the process of shielding. Attendees included a dietician, an occupational therapist, a social worker and a

financial advisor, all of whom expressed a desire to take on a greater role in our church life. This is just one example of the diversity of skills to be found amongst the laity of our parish. We should make the most of these skills within the Church, involving social workers in pastoral care and financial advisors in parish governance.

Some years ago, I coordinated a choir trip from All Souls Anglican Church to the island of St Vincent in the Diocese of the Windward Islands. Part of my role as coordinator was to select someone each morning to lead our devotions. I asked one of our quieter choir members to lead our prayers. This individual turned out to be gifted in leading the devotions. He would have been unlikely to volunteer to lead our prayers, but when asked, freely shared his gift. By reaching out and inviting lay members of the Church to participate in prayers and church services, we may find an abundance of hidden talent. The greater involvement of lay people in the life of the Church can only be a good thing.

The disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is an opportunity to re-shape church life, both at All Souls Anglican Church in Barbados, and across the Anglican Communion. Moving forward, we hope that 'how we do church' is driven by the conviction that the Holy Spirit works through those sitting in the pews as well as those preaching from the pulpit. ■

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the Holy Spirit works through those sitting in the pews



## LIVING BY FAITH

By the Rev'd Fr. Dennis Obidiegwu (Tangiers)



It all started on 27 August 2019, a few days after I returned to Morocco from USPG Conference. Around 10am, I had a massive stroke and became paralysed. I was rushed to the local hospital where I was stabilised. But around midnight I died, and then I was revived, to the glory of God. I was then taken to another hospital for further treatment. At that point, my hands and my legs were vibrating, and I had a brain bleed. I was taken to a private hospital where I was fully revived. I was kept in the intensive care unit for three days, and for a further three days on the hospital ward. Two young church members volunteered to help me with my physiotherapy programme. Two weeks later, I was able to stand and walk!

The following week, I began to move around. After three months, I went back to the hospital for a scan to check my brain bleed, and to the glory of God, I had fully recovered. Amazingly, after six months, I was back to work and able to preach. I have not suffered any permanent defects. It is only God who can do this. Many people who had similar problems to me died immediately and I know of other brain

bleed patients who were paralysed by their experiences. Since my hospitalisation, I have made a declaration that in the life I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave His life for me. The love of Christ is real in people's lives. I bear witness to this, and my story confirms that God is still proving that there is nothing God cannot do.

The Diocese in Europe, the Bishop of the Diocese of Ho, Ghana and USPG have agreed to extend the appointment for a second term after a comprehensive review including a full medical assessment. Despite my health issues and the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, I have been able to continue my ministry. One of the aspects of my ministry that I am most proud of is the youth group established at St Andrew's Church, Tangiers.

This group meets every Saturday to clean the church and litter-pick in the local neighbourhood. The young people in this group are not focused on what the Church can do for them, but more on what the group can do to help the Church grow. Two members of the youth group are now training to become lay readers. ■



there is nothing  
God cannot do



# TRUSTEE PROFILE

## MARTIN CANNING



Martin is a retired businessman with experience in marketing, business development and commercial management. He became a trustee in July 2015, six years after he and his wife Dr Jane Canning first got involved with USPAG.

'In 2009, Jane and I were searching around to try to find out where we might go to serve the Church, and with whom,' Martin says. 'We were introduced to USPAG by the chap who was our rector at the time, who had once been a USPAG mission companion in Malawi.' Martin and Jane went to Tanzania as USPAG mission companions in 2010. Martin served as the Business Development Consultant to the Anglican Church of Tanzania from January 2010 to July 2012. He was based at the Provincial Office in Dodoma and worked with all the dioceses. Jane, meanwhile, lectured at St John's University in Dodoma. 'I think what surprised me the most about USPAG was the extent and the depths of the links to the Anglican Communion and to partner churches around the world,' he says. 'I kind of knew that USPAG had connections but didn't really appreciate how extensive and how deep those connections were.'

'What I find incredibly powerful is that range of relationships between here and the rest of the partner churches around the world. It is such a wonderful part of what USPAG offers and does, and, also the willingness to renew and to be relevant to the current context. With an organisation with history as long as USPAG's, there could be a tendency to rest on its laurels. But it doesn't do that, which I think is really important. If there is a Bible verse that best encapsulates both USPAG's ethos and my rationale for being a part of USPAG's work, it would be Micah 6:8, which tells us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.'

Martin's work experience has mostly been in sales and marketing and business development, commercial management services, understanding the workings of a business in terms of how it interacts with its customer base and the public. 'We need business experience as part of the trustees' skillset and this is the area that I can bring something to,' he says. 'I offer some of that: about 30 years' experience in business in an international setting. I have operated in international businesses on both sides of the Atlantic and in other countries in the Middle East, Africa and further afield.'

'I'm now retired, so keeping on top of USPAG business isn't as challenging as it would be if I were still in full-time work. The challenge now is trying to stay connected to it in the in-between times. You pick up and you read material ready for a meeting. But if you are not careful, it just becomes a few days when you focus and concentrate on USPAG work and then it goes off the table until the next time something comes up. I'm slightly more fortunate in one respect, as I'm on the Finance and Audit Committee as well, so we have more meetings and different things to look at and that keeps USPAG business on the table a bit more for me. But there is still very much an issue of keeping it live and relevant in the in-between times.'

Martin believes that huge changes are going to take place within the Anglican Communion over the next five years and that USPAG has a crucial role to play during that time. 'I pray that the Anglican Communion will survive,' he says. 'I think that more of the power within the Communion is going to move towards churches that are larger in number, and I think the Church of England will struggle with the issue of losing some of its position of authority. 'I think as far as the Communion is concerned, I think there are a lot of opportunities I would like to see USPAG come out and follow on. I can envision USPAG being a kind of conscience, if you like, for the Anglican Communion: pressing, stimulating and holding up a mirror to what the Communion is doing, and speaking up for the partner churches that we have relationships with. The partnerships USPAG has with those churches are different to those that the various churches have with the Anglican Communion. I would hope that this difference will be the thing that USPAG brings to the Communion, and that the Communion will be able to recognize the significant role that USPAG can play in that.' ■



# SAFE HANDS

By the Rev'd Canon Robert Sihubwa  
(Province of Central Africa)

**The Anglican Church in Zambia is comprised primarily of young people. In the Diocese of Lusaka, 64% of our church members are below the age of 25. This is a typical picture of church life in the Anglican Church in Zambia, though there are inevitably exceptions – namely rural churches with older populations.**

The involvement of young people in the Church is heartening to see. However, these young people need to be trained in discipleship and prepared to be leaders of the Church. Although they have much enthusiasm for the mission of the Church, our young people still have a lot to learn about how the Church works in practice.

A young boy in Zambia



## SAFE HANDS

I believe it is important that current Church leaders have an opportunity to pass on their wisdom and advice to our young people.

In light of this, I offer my own advice to young people currently involved in the lay life of the Church. As an ordained priest for the last 13 years, and an active lay member of the Church before that, I have seen young people with great passion leave the Church. These young people could have been great leaders in the Church, but were either ignored or sidelined for being too young to take on responsibility. Going forward, I hope that we can help our youth to stay and lead, rather than to leave. To do this, we must take our young people seriously. One way to do this is to give young people responsibility in the life of the Church.

Churches that view young people as 'leaders of the future' and not leaders of the present tend not to truly consider the impact and influence youth can have in churches, parishes and across dioceses. Consequently, young people feel like they do not fully belong in the Church and, understandably, do not wish to volunteer for roles or responsibilities in their local church. Instead of taking this patronising approach, churches should intentionally celebrate the talents that young people bring to church life; this would encourage our youth to take responsibility and I believe it would also increase their sense of belonging in the Church.

A great example of this can be seen in the Diocese of Lusaka. One of the parishes in this diocese has a Media Team, led by a 25-year-old church member, and their Parish Treasurer is only 27-years-old. This parish is currently thriving, with over 1,500 churchgoing members.

In addition to intentionally involving young people in the life of the Church, I also believe that churches need to show they have the ability to adapt rather than remain stuck in old ways. It is true that we worship the same God who has and does not change from everlasting to everlasting. However, while the object of our worship remains constant, how we worship God continues to evolve over time. Church service formats that transformed lives over 50 years ago may not appeal to the young people of the Church today.

One example of this is that beating a traditional drum may once have moved someone's heart to worship whereas now a guitar might move

someone to worship. Some parishes are more receptive to emerging expressions of worship than others, and I am aware of parishes rejecting any suggestions to change their style of worship. One parish I know of includes a church offering traditional worship and another church providing a more modern form of service. The former only has 40 young people in attendance whilst the latter frequently has over 350 youths in its congregation.

Insisting that young people worship God in the same way they might have done 100 years ago is like asking a 40-year-old to wear the same tee-shirt he wore when he was 5-years-old. If an adult tried to wear a child's tee-shirt, it would become damaged or torn; it simply would not fit. Churches that remain set in their ways are free to worship as they always have, but they should not be surprised if fewer young people attend their church services. From the outside, such churches look like they are concerned only with the maintenance of the Church, rather than its growth.

In Zambia, the churches which adopt more modern forms of worship not only attract large numbers of young people, they also tend to have more engaged young people; these churches have the youth at their core, volunteering in many different roles. These young people seem to feel a greater sense of belonging at churches which speak directly to their needs and concerns. By participating in the life of the Church, the youth seek to maintain the unique nature of Anglicanism in Zambia, but also to ensure that the Anglican Church in Zambia does not dwell on its past glories.

I hope that the leadership of the Anglican Church in Zambia realises and appreciates the role of young people in the Church, not just as 'future leaders' but as active participants in the current work of the Church. In recent years, an increasing number of parishes and dioceses have invested in mentorship programmes and leadership training for young people; we hope this investment bears fruit. Furthermore, I hope that young people in the Church acknowledge their role as a bridge between the traditions of the past and the uncertainty of the future. If the Anglican Church in Zambia continues to intentionally welcome and engage young people across the country, then I believe its future is in safe hands. ■



I have seen young people with great passion leave the Church

## CALLED TO SERVE

By Lana McPhail (Grenada)

Whenever one hears someone utter the words 'called to serve', one assumes they are discussing training for ordained ministry. In a recent conversation with a friend about taking early retirement, I was asked what my plans were. I immediately responded, 'I think I am called to serve in the Church'. My friend responded: 'You, a Priest? I did not see that one coming'. In my experience, the role of the laity in the Church is not recognized as an important ministry. Clergy are seen as the true representatives of the Church whereas lay people are merely seen as helpers.

The involvement of lay people in the Church dates back to the early Church. In his writings to the church at Corinth, St Paul calls the lay people of the church saints. In the Book of Common Prayer, the ministry of lay people is described as follows: 'to represent Christ and his Church, to bear witness wherever they may be and according to the gifts given them, to carry out Christ's work of reconciliation in the world and to take their place in the life, worship and governance of the Church'.

In the Diocese of the Windward Islands, the Church calls members of laity to serve alongside clergy in the various organs of the Church. Lay people are invited to participate in decision-making processes at parish,

archdeaconry, diocesan, and provincial levels. The churchwardens, who are elected from the laity, manage church resources and finances.

Lay people are also involved in several ministries in the Church. These roles include altar guild, choir member, server, usher, lay reader, lector, Sunday School teacher, and fundraiser. I often think, would Holy Mass be the same without the Altar Guild to prepare the altar linen, flowers, vessels, and vestments? What would happen to the Church if we didn't have servers, lay readers, choir members or lectors? How many of our churches can survive without fundraising? The Sunday School, which is critical to Christian formation, is led by lay people. Across the Anglican Communion, Sunday School is where many Christians first discover their faith.

But is the importance of these ministries truly recognized? Can the Church survive without them? In my opinion, the Church would not survive without the lifeblood of the laity. The Covid-19 pandemic requires the Church to respond to human needs differently; the work of the Church must extend beyond its walls. Let us take advantage of this opportunity, recognise the importance of the laity in the life of the Church and fully utilize their skills and talents. ■



Young servers lead church procession

“

the work of the Church must extend beyond its walls

# USPG VOLUNTEER

ANDREW WINTON



Andrew Winton

Andrew's journey with USPG started as soon as he retired from his job as a consultant in biscuit production. 'I felt called to go and do mission work', he says. 'My job involved significant travel to most of the world, and I had this feeling that God was calling me to repay all of the good things that happened to me on my travels'.

Andrew became a Christian when he was a teenager, attending his local Baptist church. During his working life, he found it difficult to remain engaged with his faith, until he started attending a local URC church in the early 1990s. He enquired about the possibility of going out on a mission trip after retirement. Struggling to find an appropriate programme, he was eventually introduced to USPG by his URC minister, who suggested that Andrew check out USPG's 'Journey with Us' programme.

This was an ideal length for Andrew, and he soon got in touch with Habib Nader, USPG's Regional Manager for the Church in the Province of the West Indies. Andrew attended his interview, completed the requisite training and was offered the opportunity to go to St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean. 'A door opened, and the next thing I knew was that I had been accepted', he recalls.

## At the age of 72, Andrew embarked on a mission trip.

Andrew was given a placement in St Vincent in which he was able to use his skills as a 'part-time organist'. He played the organ at church services at St George's Cathedral in Kingston and St Paul's parish church in Callequa. He also helped community organisations with business ideas and shared a recipe for Valentine's Day biscuits, among other biscuit recipes, with the islanders. Andrew's placement has had a positive impact on his life in a number of ways. He says, 'I'm

part of the Christian family in St Vincent now, and have a very strong connection with them. We chat, we email and exchange text messages. It's wonderful'. In addition to this new set of relationships, Andrew's experience with USPG also deepened his faith: 'it was a big step forward for me to go on this placement for six months and God gave me the strength to do that'. 'Being in St Vincent taught me to be humble, not to think about me but to think about the Lord and what He wants me to do'.

Andrew adds that 'I had both the time and the encouragement to be much stricter with myself in terms of the time I spent praying and reading the Bible'. These habits have remained with Andrew, who says that 'these routines have been a great boon to me, providing structure to my spiritual life'. The welcome that Andrew received from USPG when he first enquired about mission trips also encouraged him to start attending his local Anglican church once he had returned from St Vincent. 'I had been told by other mission agencies that I would be too old to go on a mission trip, but USPG made it possible for me'.

Since returning from his placement in 2013, Andrew has taken part in a so-called 'USPG reflections weekend' and spoke about his time in St Vincent at a Regional Day. Andrew was due to speak at other events but unfortunately these were cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Following USPG Conference a few years ago, Andrew hosted the Rt Rev'd Leopold Friday, Bishop of the Windward Islands, whom he had got to know well whilst on placement in St Vincent. 'We had a lovely five days together, going for walks and having spiritual conversations', Andrew recalls.

Andrew appreciates USPG's work during the pandemic, particularly the continued production of the Prayer Diary. 'I think this is super, and it highlights the fact that the world hasn't just stopped because of Covid-19'. Andrew also says that the disruption caused by the pandemic has meant he has had more time to engage with initiatives like For Such A Time As This, USPG's Lent course for 2021.

For anyone considering going on a mission trip once the Covid-19 pandemic is over, Andrew says 'if you feel called to go, check it out and see if you really are called. And if you really are called, do it!'. Pandemic permitting, Andrew says that 'I feel called, and am on a personal mission, to visit friends and family around the country and to share my faith with them once again'. ■



## FROM POLICE TO PRIESTHOOD

By Chrispen Gumbs (North Eastern Caribbean & Aruba)

I am the sixth of seven children in my family. Church was an integral part of our upbringing. My family always worshipped together. We observed our mother's love for God and her commitment to Christ and the Church and that, in turn, became a way of life for all of us.

As a child, my Sunday routine was to attend the Morning Service and then Sunday School in the afternoon. I attended youth group meetings at least once a week too. My mother was a praying woman. As we lived in a small, two-bedroom house, we were able to hear her praying for each of us nightly. Over time, I grew to believe that her fervent dedication to prayer and her petitions to God for each child was a strategy. I can still hear her saying, "Lord, I pray that Chrispen will become a Priest."



Chrispen Gumbs (left) with Bishop Errol Brooks (third from right).

At the age of 15, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour and committed myself to Christ and the Church. I joined the Royal Anguilla Police Force at 18 years-old and subsequently retired with the rank of Inspector after 30 years of service. Many people have asked me why I chose to be a police officer and how I would have the time to be a police officer and an active lay member of the Church. However, I held fast to the belief that through God all things are possible and never doubted that I would be able to balance the two. After all, my mother was praying for me! More importantly, I believed that God had a plan for me and that I had chosen the right path.

During my time in the police, I never compromised my Christian principles. In every situation I always endeavoured to show love and compassion, ensuring that those I encountered were treated fairly. I believe that, whatever career we have chosen, as Christians we have a responsibility to proclaim the Gospel through the encounters we have with others.

In 1993, a change in my deployment made it possible for me to attend church more frequently and become more actively involved with Sunday School, youth work and altar serving. This was shortly after the new Priest-in-Charge, Canon Errol Brooks, now Bishop of the Diocese of North Eastern Caribbean and Aruba, began his ministry in Anguilla. I became involved as a Lay Reader in the Church, assisting Canon Errol at Morning and Evening Prayers.

This role became even more pronounced when Canon Errol ascended to the post of Bishop of the Diocese in 1998. Because of his frequent travels abroad, I performed more Lay Reader duties, and, with time, I grew deeper and deeper in my service to God. On Advent Sunday 2008, I was licensed as a Lay Reader and Chalice Bearer in the parish of The Pro-Cathedral of St Mary's with St Augustine's and St Andrews Anglican Church. I continued conducting morning and evening prayers, funeral services and Chalice Bearing during regular Eucharistic services.

Members of the clergy were incredibly supportive of my lay ministry, using every opportunity to impart knowledge and wisdom and giving opportunities in church services. Their advice helped me to discern my calling. Over the years, my mother, God rest her soul, and the entire Anguillian community showed their love, respect, and admiration for me as I functioned as both a member of the Police and the Church. In many situations, I was able to act as a mediator, and I spent the majority of my years of service in Community Policing. On occasions when we lost officers, I was called upon to lead in prayers as well as funeral arrangements. Additionally, I spoke at Methodist funeral services and led ecumenical Services of Thanksgiving.

In 2014, my family and I began ministering to the sick and home-bound in the Parish of St Mary's, Anguilla. We performed home visits, singing and praying with those unable to come to church. We did this until 2020, when I moved to the UK to begin my Theological Studies.

God's grace, coupled with my mother's prayers, enabled me to heed God's call on my life. As we are told in the Bible, "I am sure that God, who began this good work in me, will carry it on until it is finished on the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). ■



During my time in the police, I never compromised my Christian principles

# GARDENS OF LIFE

## HARVEST APPEAL 2021

**While Zimbabwe is on the way to reducing HIV and AIDS, many of those who live with HIV still face stigma around disclosing their status.**

To support local people, the Church of Zimbabwe's stigma reduction programme trains church leaders on issues of HIV and has created wellness groups that provide a network to people living with HIV. As well as emotional support, they offer access to food gardens to improve nutrition and help with developing sustainable livelihoods.

People living with HIV are facing the problem of food shortages during the Coronavirus pandemic. Food insecurity brings additional negative effects as good nutrition is a key factor for adherence to Antiretroviral (ARV) therapy.

This may increase the rate of progression to AIDS and further exacerbate the level of stigma and discrimination. 848 people living with HIV are now participating in the wellness groups and it has been transformational for those in the programme.

**This Harvest we are raising funds for projects including the wellness gardens in Zimbabwe.**



**DONATE TODAY AND HELP FUND THIS LIFE CHANGING WORK**

## HOPE'S STORY

**The situation caused a lot of stress and arguing in the family and her health deteriorated.**

The nurses at her local clinic advised her to seek counselling and social support. Hope and other people living with HIV in her area tried to mobilise themselves but there were no defined structures to support them.

The Anglican Diocese of Masvingo introduced the HIV stigma and discrimination reduction programme and others in her community embraced it. They were helped to set up a nutrition garden where they

were able to meet and support each other as they grew vegetables.

The income generating activities that she was taught in the garden enabled her to send her secondary aged children back to school. Her health has also improved with the extra nutrition, along with adhering to her Antiretroviral therapy. She now shares her story in her village and many of those who initially shunned her have joined the wellness groups.

**DONATE NOW TO SUPPORT PEOPLE LIKE HOPE**







# HARVEST APPEAL 2021

**GARDENS OF LIFE**  
HARVEST APPEAL 2021



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**Donate today and help fund this life changing work**

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