

A HEART FOR MISSION

A five-week study guide looking at faith in action,
drawing inspiration from the Anglican Church of Myanmar



USPG⁺ PARTNERS IN
GLOBAL MISSION

A HEART FOR MISSION

For many Christians, mission is why the church is here. For others, the word 'mission' has become tainted with ideas of colonialism or heavy-handed evangelism. And then there are many more people who are confused or indifferent about exactly what mission is.

The aim of this study course is to take a fresh look at mission and what it means in the twenty-first century. To help us do this, we will be exploring the Five Marks of Mission – a definition of mission adopted by Anglican Churches around the world – and we will gain a global perspective by looking at how the Church of the Province of Myanmar understands and lives out mission.

We hope that by the end of this short course, we will each have a fresh understanding of mission's place at the heart of our faith.

WORKING WITH THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION

In the 1980s, opinion among Anglican Churches around the world was heavily divided between those who saw mission only in terms of personal salvation, and those who saw mission as being solely about development and social change. The Anglican Consultative Council – an international body which represents the Anglican Communion – held a series of meetings to examine the meaning of mission. The council recognised that neither evangelism nor development alone did justice to the Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19 – ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth.’ Between 1984 and 1990, the council met many times to debate, study and pray together. The council identified what they called the Five Marks of Mission – five intertwined parts that together comprise a holistic understanding of mission. In their most recent formulation, the five Marks are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of Creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The aims of this study course are to examine the Five Marks of Mission, ask how they can strengthen our understanding of mission and consider how the Anglican Church of Myanmar puts them into action.

FOCUSING ON MISSION SINCE 1701

Since its formation, USPG's primary focus has been mission.

Founded in 1701 as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) by Rev'd Dr Thomas Bray, the SPG worked to ensure that English emigrants to America retained their Anglican faith. In the 1800s and early 1900s, the SPG focused on medical mission and education. The SPG is now called USPG, and no longer sends missionaries abroad.

Instead, USPG works with mission partners across the Anglican Communion, learning from each other as we live out a new kind of mission. USPG supports and facilitates diocesan and provincial initiatives, led by local churches. These initiatives often focus on community healthcare, theological education and ecological justice.

By partnering with, rather than "doing mission" to, local churches, we better understand what is needed in certain contexts. We

also learn from these churches, gaining a greater understanding of practical and theological issues, which we can then apply to our own context.

The difference between the mission at the heart of Bray's SPG and USPG's current model of partnership in mission is stark. Yet throughout our history, mission in one form or another has been at the centre of who we are and what we do. This brings us to the topic of this study guide: what is mission and how do we understand it today?



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Throughout history, mission has been at the centre of who we are and what we do

A CLOSER LOOK AT ANGLICANISM

ANGLICAN COMMUNION

The Anglican Communion is a global network of churches that originated with the Church of England.

ANGLICAN CHURCHES, PROVINCES AND DIOCESES

There is no single worldwide ‘Anglican Church’, rather there is a self-governing Anglican Church for every province – a province is often a single country but can be a group of countries. For example, the Anglican Church of Korea covers Korea only; the Anglican Church of Central Africa covers Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Each province is divided into dioceses. For example, there are 42 dioceses in the Church of England (Diocese of Manchester, Diocese of Lincoln, etc.). Each province is headed up by an archbishop (though the exact title may vary); each diocese is headed up by a bishop.

ANGLICANS WORLDWIDE

There are currently an estimated 80 million Anglicans in 41 Anglican Churches around the world.

THE FOUR INSTRUMENTS OF COMMUNION

The Anglican Communion is given focus and direction by the four ‘Instruments of Communion’. These are:

- The Archbishop of Canterbury, as the “first among equals”;
- The Lambeth Conferences, held every ten years, to which all archbishops and bishops are invited;
- Primates Meetings, to which all leaders of provinces are invited;
- The Anglican Consultative Council, which meets every two years and whose membership includes representatives from throughout the church in every province, including people who aren’t ordained as church leaders.



There are currently an estimated 80 million Anglicans around the world.

MISSION AND THE CHURCH OF MYANMAR

USPG started engaging with the Church of the Province of Myanmar (CPM) in 1854. Over the years, close relationships have been built between USPG and CPM through education, healthcare and leadership initiatives.

In the face of legal restrictions and political uncertainty, the Church in Myanmar demonstrates the love of Jesus Christ as it serves marginalised communities.

The Rt Rev'd John Wilme, former Bishop of Toungoo Diocese, says: "Mission means sharing the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ through action, not only in preaching or telling the Gospel, but going into the field and serving the poor. In Myanmar, it is difficult to share the Good News as Christians are a minority group. So, we do this through our services – providing healthcare and training teachers".

The Rt Rev'd Dr Mark Saw Maung Doe, Bishop of

Hpa-an Diocese, relates the ministry of the Church of the Province of Myanmar to Ecclesiastes 3:7 – "there is a time to be silent and a time to speak". He says "Jesus taught the disciples about the kingdom of God without tiring, yet after He was arrested, Jesus stopped speaking and kept silent. For Jesus, the time to speak was over and it was the time to be silent". Likewise, there are times when it is appropriate for the CPM to speak directly to people about the Good News, and there are times when it is more effective evangelism to quietly continue to provide services for local communities.



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The Church in Myanmar demonstrates the love of Jesus Christ.

MYANMAR FACTFILE

- › **Capital city:** Nay Pyi Taw
- › **Largest city by population:** Yangon
- › **Languages:** Burmese, indigenous
- › **Religion:** Buddhist 88%, Christian 6%, ethnic languages Muslim 4%, animist 1%, other 1%
- › **Population:** 54.6 million
- › **Life expectancy:** 68 years
- › **Adult literacy:** 76%
- › **Exports:** Natural gas, wood, pulses and beans, fish, rice, clothing, jade
- › **The Church of the Province of Myanmar** has six dioceses and two missionary dioceses, with an overall membership of over 70,000.



Overall membership of over 70,000

STUDY 1

TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

The First Mark of Mission reflects the Gospel passages in which Jesus sends his disciples out to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God (e.g. Matthew 10:5-42, Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 9:1-6). In some ways, this first Mark is a summary of all five Marks, as it encompasses evangelism, service, transformation and renewal. As we look at this First Mark of Mission, let us ponder the theologian Emil Brunner's phrase: "the Church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning".

GETTING STARTED

At the outset of this course, reflect on what mission means to you. Write down one or two sentences that summarise your current understanding of mission.

A STORY FROM MYANMAR

The heart of the Church of the Province of Myanmar (CPM) is dedicated to following the word of God and the Church has been engaged with evangelism and mission work for decades. In 2014, the Evangelism and Mission (E&M) department revised and developed its vision and objectives. One

of its objectives was for members of the Church to develop an evangelism strategy. Accordingly, the department selects a mission area for each diocese each year, leading to annual mission trips. The mission areas are usually locations where there only a few believers and where healthcare provision is scarce.

In 2016, the Evangelism and Mission department visited Aung Soe Moe village in Kanyutkwin parish. Over the past twenty years, Aung Soe Moe village has been within the conflict zone of the dispute between the Myanmar military and the Karen National Union army; this means that it has been closed to visitors.

In recent years, ceasefires have been signed between the two parties, meaning that people can visit the area again.

Before the Church visited Aung Soe Moe, there were only five Anglican families living in the village. From 1st to 10th December 2016, the Evangelism and Mission (E&M) department took a team of 25 staff to the village, comprised of doctors, nurses, and the directors of six diocesan departments. The E&M department shared and staged the Christmas story, performed a Biblical play, shared the Good News of the gospel in their own dialect, prayed with the villagers and supplied medical treatment during the ten days they

spent in the village. At the time there was no Anglican church in the area and the E&M team were generously allowed to live in the Baptist church hall and as guests in the homes of their Baptists' hosts for the duration of their stay.

The visiting Evangelism and Mission team showed the love of God by sharing the gospel with the villagers as well as showing the practical work of mission by living out the example of Jesus. "Mission is sharing and announcing the gospel and showing loving care together," said Ruth Pathi Paw, the Assistant Director of the Provincial E&M, one of the leaders on the medical mission trip.



Before the Church visited Aung Soe Moe, there were only five Anglican families living in the village.

QUESTIONS

- › List the different ways in which the Evangelism and Mission team spread the good news of the Gospel.
- › Which of these activities could you use to spread the Gospel in your community?
- › What challenges did the Evangelism and Mission department face in spreading the Gospel? What challenges do you face when sharing the Gospel in your own context?

COLOSSIANS 1:19-23

19 For in him [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. **21** And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, **23** provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

QUESTIONS

- › Discuss your understanding of verses 19-20. How does this section of the passage affect your idea of mission?
- › In which ways, positive and negative, is the Church presented in this passage?
- › What is your understanding of the Church's mission to all creation? How do you live out this understanding in your daily life?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for loving us and giving us Your only Son. We also thank You for giving us the opportunity to proclaim the Good News to the world: that we are saved from sin and have received eternal life through Jesus Christ.

By the Rev'd Alan Kyaw Myo Naing, Diocese of Yangon

ACT


This week, think about how you spread the Good News of the Gospel. If you feel that you don't, think about how you could start to do this. Bring these ideas to share at your next meeting.



Send forth
labourers into the
harvest

STUDY 2

TO TEACH, BAPTISE AND NURTURE NEW BELIEVERS

A serene landscape with mountains and a body of water. The scene is captured in a cool, blue-toned palette. In the foreground, a calm body of water reflects the sky and the distant mountains. Several thin, vertical poles or reeds stand in the water, their reflections clearly visible. The middle ground shows a line of trees and shrubs. In the background, a range of mountains stretches across the horizon under a soft, overcast sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

The Second Mark of Mission uses the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”. The task for the Church is to help new believers to grow in their faith and understanding. How do we do this in a sensitive manner without diluting the power of the Gospel?

GETTING STARTED

For many people, the Sunday sermon is the only Christian teaching in the week, but we can learn new things in many other ways. Think, for example, about all the creative ways in which young children are helped to learn.

A STORY FROM MYANMAR

The Evangelism and Mission (E&M) department of the Church of the Province of Myanmar (CPM) has developed a mission strategy according to the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion. It is the department’s strong belief that their work is to nurture new believers by teaching

them scripture from the Holy Bible, how to pray, how to engage in Christian fellowship and how to be good stewards of the Earth. The E&M department also believes that by nurturing new believers, mature churches will emerge. Therefore, the department seeks to develop communities by coordinating a holistic church-planting

strategy alongside local Christians. Church-planting training is provided annually for those who wish to attend. The aim of this training is to identify people who feel called to proclaim the gospel and nurture new believers in the CPM.

The Diocese of Myitkyina, one of the Church of the Province of Myanmar's eight dioceses, selected Tarung village in the Shinbweyan township as a mission area. Tarung village is 150 miles away from Myitkyina, and you need to travel by car than boat to reach the village. There are only seven Christians in the village and the remaining local residents are Buddhists and Animists. The villagers earn their living through agriculture and animal husbandry.

The provision of education is scarce, with no one from the area passing the Tenth Standard examination, which is taken at the end of their schooling. The Diocese of Myitkyina selected 10 young people from their area to serve as teachers and has been sending them to Tarung village since 2019. These young people attended

church planting training at the provincial office in Yangon. However, the Diocese needed to provide a boarding hostel for the teachers before they could commence their mission work. The Diocese took this first step by building a boarding house with local church members. The teachers sent from Myitkyina are currently teaching Jingpho and English language skills to the children in Tarung village, as well as scripture, hymns and worship songs. This is to nurture the spirituality and knowledge of the new believers and to encourage the growth of a new church in the area. By December 2020, two new believers had been baptised. "We need to nurture new believers because many begin to doubt their beliefs when there is no one to care for and encourage them. God has given us a commandment to baptise people and teach them to obey everything he has commanded us," said Sayama Valentina Khin Thet Waj, Coordinator of the Evangelism and Mission department. Proclaiming the gospel and doing mission must go together, she added.



There are only seven Christians in the village

QUESTIONS

- A boarding house needed to be built before the teachers could engage in mission. What practical obstacles do you face when trying to nurture new believers?
- Only a few Christians live in the village, alongside Buddhists and Animists. Is your church situated in a religiously diverse area? If so, how do you balance engagement with other faiths and the encouragement of new believers?
- How is your church community teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers? Discuss in your groups how to do this effectively.

ROMANS 12: 1-8

1I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **2**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. **3** For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. **4** For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, **5** so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. **6** We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; **7** ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; **8** the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.



Many begin to doubt their beliefs when there is no one to care for and encourage them.

QUESTIONS

- “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds”. How can we be transformed by the renewing of our minds? How do we engage intellectually in our sharing of the Gospel?
- The Bible passage mentions various gifts held by members of the Body of Christ. What gifts can you identify and encourage in yourself and in others?
- How can you use the gifts in your church community to nurture new believers?

PRAYER

Almighty God,
Help us to become disciples by following
Your footsteps.

Help us to show Your light to the world
by living in discipleship.

Teach us to become Your true disciples.

By the Rev'd Alan Kyaw Myo Naing,
Diocese of Yangon

ACT

Baptism welcomes new believers into the Church. Think about how you could make your church more welcoming. Perhaps you could volunteer as a greeter at your church or invite new people to participate in worship. Discuss your ideas to make church more welcoming at the next meeting.

STUDY 3

TO RESPOND TO HUMAN NEED BY LOVING SERVICE



The Third Mark of Mission is concerned with Christ-like loving service. We all have needs, and we all need love. When we feel loved, we are better able to love others. But what is love?

GETTING STARTED

Many times in the Bible, we are called to love our neighbours. As this study shows, our neighbour is not just the person who lives next door to us and may not even be from the same area.

A STORY FROM MYANMAR

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many young people served as volunteers in the quarantine centres of Yangon. Many people from different Christian denominations, including Anglican young people, willingly accepted the Ministry of Health's request for volunteers through the Myanmar Council

of Churches and enrolled themselves as volunteers.

The Ministry of Health requested volunteers through the Myanmar Christian Council as soon as the first Covid-19 case was discovered in Yangon in March 2020. The Archbishop of Myanmar is the Chairman of the Council and, with the help

of churches across Myanmar, called young people to serve as volunteers. One of the volunteers was Wendy Shune Le Ye Tun, aged 20, who said that, “by the Grace of God, I was happy to serve as a volunteer in the Covid-19 quarantine centre”.

The volunteers registered new arrivals and patients who had been discharged from the quarantine centre. Wendy served as a volunteer twice: first at the Women and Childrens Hospital in South Okkalapa Township, and then in the Covid-19 Medical Centre in Phaung Gyi. During her volunteer work at the Women and Childrens’ Hospital, she worked as one of twelve volunteers who were assigned different tasks. These tasks included cleaning both the inside and outside of the building, disinfecting surfaces and cleaning toilets, as well as assisting in the electric generator and oxygen

cylinder stock control rooms. After each placement, volunteers spent 14 days in quarantine, so they could then go and work in another quarantine centre. In the Covid-19 Medical Centre in Phaung Gyi, volunteers were divided into three groups: Intensive Care staff, ward staff and store and laundry staff. The volunteers’ main task was to clean the wards, clearing away the material that doctors and nurses had used. The work was challenging, but volunteers were pleased to show their love to patients, doctors and nurses.

Wendy Shune Le Ye Tun said that she was happy to serve in the name of Christ during the Covid-19 pandemic. She prays that people around the world show their love to each other and help each other, and she hopes and prays that the pandemic will soon be over.

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By the Grace of God, I was happy to serve as a volunteer



QUESTIONS

- What do you think might be the inspiration and motivation behind the volunteer workers' desire to offer loving service? What inspires and motivates you to serve others?
- Think about the relationships you have in your community. Would you be willing to serve others like the volunteers in the story? If so, how can you do this in your own context?
- There is an idea that to be in a real relationship with someone we must be willing to share our fragility and vulnerabilities. What challenges does this throw up for how we are 'doing' mission? What does it mean in terms of our relationship with God?

LUKE 10:25-37

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' **26** He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' **27** He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' **28** And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.' **29** But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' **30** Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care

of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” **36** Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ **37** He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

QUESTIONS

- In the light of this well-known passage, think about who your neighbour is.
- Think of times when you have found it difficult to love your neighbour. Why did you find it difficult? How were you able to overcome this difficulty?
- We sometimes hear that loving God and others is a Christian duty or responsibility. But if love is a duty, is it genuine love? How can we show loving service to someone we don't love?

PRAYER

Loving God, help us to be humble servants.

May we serve You as we serve each other.

Open our eyes to the diverse nature of the Body of Christ and help us to be a blessing to others.


By Ester Snow Hnin Hnin Aye, Holy Cross
Theological College, Yangon

ACT

Love cannot be forced. ‘Freely you have received; freely give’ (Matthew 10:8). Individually and collectively as a church, consider how you may begin to share more of your blessings with others? Bring these thoughts to the next meeting.

STUDY 4

TO SEEK TO TRANSFORM UNJUST STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY, TO CHALLENGE VIOLENCE OF EVERY KIND AND TO PURSUE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION



The Fourth Mark of Mission challenges us to examine how the gospel can make a difference in the world, not just to individuals, but to the structures and institutions that shape all our lives.

GETTING STARTED

Christians are called to work for justice in a world where the weak are often oppressed by the wealthy and powerful. However, while it is easy to see the outworking of injustice, sometimes the underlying causes are hard to detect.

A STORY FROM MYANMAR

Poe Paw Lay village is located on a mountainside near the Thailand-Myanmar border. Around 30 households live there. Most of the villagers are Buddhist, some are Christian, and some are Animists. The majority of residents are farmers: they grow rice and sesame using the shifting

cultivation method.

The long-running struggle for peace in Myanmar made significant progress in 2020. After the election in November, a peace negotiation was established between the different parties involved, and preliminary agreements were reached. Part of this agreement was a plan to

repatriate people who had fled the country due to the conflict. Poe Paw Lay is one of the villages which received repatriated people from refugee camps along the border.

The Bishop of Hpa-an, The Rt Revd Saw Mark Maung Doe, saw this as an opportunity for Poe Paw Lay village to develop its education, healthcare and economic sectors. Due to this development, the community has grown more peaceful and there is more stability in the village. However, there are two villages near Poe Paw Lay called Panwelbue and Pwar Bukyoe. These villages have struggled to source safe drinking water for several years. It takes the villagers an hour to gather water and bring it back to the village, and they can only store rainwater once the wet season has begun.

When staff from the Diocese of Hpa-an visited Poe Paw Lay, villagers from Panwelbue and Pwar Bukyoe asked if the visitors could help solve the water problem. As a result, the diocesan staff

and the villagers looked for a water source at the top of the mountain. They found a good place to collect water, only 4 miles from the village. However, there was another challenge: pipes would have to be laid to the village, passing two farms. Some villagers disagreed about allowing access to their land to lay these pipes.

Consequently, development staff from the Diocese of Hpa-an gathered with the villagers to discuss solutions. Multiple meetings were held until all of the villagers understood how important water was to everyone. Happily, work on the project started, with villagers from all three villages helping to lay and connect pipes. After two weeks, the villagers received clean water.

Naw Mu, one of the villagers, said, “because of the Diocese and donors, we now have water, unity and peace. I would like to thank all who supported to us”.



We now have
water, unity and
peace

QUESTIONS

- Residents from three different villages worked together to resolve an injustice. Which organisations could you work with in your local area to challenge injustice?
- Two of the villages needed a new water source whilst another did not. Are there existing injustices or needs in your area that others need help to solve or meet? How can you or your church help them to do this?
- The success of the water supply led to peace amongst the villagers. What issues divide your local community? How can you address these issues?

ISAIAH 35: 1-7

1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus **2** it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.'

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty



The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad

ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall
become reeds and rushes.

QUESTIONS

- Think of somewhere currently experiencing great injustice. What would this passage mean to the people in that place?
- Consider verses 5-6. If people currently experiencing the injustices you've just considered could speak to the whole world, what might they say? What might your response be to this?
- Which issues is your church engaged with? Are these causes central to the mission of your church? How can people get more involved with these causes?

PRAYER

Lord God, give us the inspiration to build a community focused on peace, justice and hope.

May we protect the vulnerable and weak,
Providing food and shelter to the hungry and homeless.

Make us salt and light in the darkness,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

By Ester Snow Hnin Hnin Aye, Holy Cross
Theological College, Yangon

ACT

Identify an area of injustice in your own community, think how your church may be able to address this and think who your church might need to partner with to combat this injustice effectively.



Identify an area of
injustice in your
own community

STUDY 5

TO STRIVE TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION AND SUSTAIN AND RENEW THE LIFE OF THE EARTH



The Fifth Mark of Mission reminds us that God longs for harmony in the whole of Creation, not just in the human family. By contrast, humanity has become proficient in spoiling the planet, poisoning seas, rivers and land, cutting down rainforests, and endangering plants and animals.

GETTING STARTED

God loves people, who are made in God's image. What does the rest of Creation – the planet, the universe, plants and animals – reveal about God?

A STORY FROM MYANMAR

The Rev'd Samuel Zaw Seng, recounting the words of villagers in Nant Pauk Pauk in the Naga Hills, said, "we never thought that the environment was included in creation, only after a Bible reflection did we come to realize this".

The Rev'd Samuel is a development staff

member working for the Church of the Province of Myanmar (CPM). He is responsible for community work in the Diocese of Mandalay, yet became involved in projects in the Naga Hills, particularly around the Khamtee township. The journey from Mandalay to Khamtee takes 1 hour by plane. Once in Khamtee, it takes

4 hours to get to the Naga villages by boat. The nearest town in the area is Kaung Hein but from there it is a walk of 4 hours to get to Nant Pauk Pauk village, home of the agricultural farm project.

The Naga people live frugal lives. They fish in the stream and plant rice on the hillside, using slash and burn cultivation. When they fish, they use chemicals which slow the fish down, making them easier to catch. The Naga people cut down trees to make clearings for planting rice, then burn the field when they have finished with it.

They do this every year which depletes the forests and creates barren hills in the area. Unfortunately, they do not understand the effect of their actions on the environment.

The Rev'd Samuel saw this happening every year and decided to teach them to plant rice in a field instead of on the hillside. The Rev'd Samuel provided biblical reflections on creation and God's vision for human beings. The community listened with awe and slowly began to understand the vision of God

for humanity.

The residents of the village came to understand God's purpose for them on the earth: to care for the environment and for themselves. They stopped using chemicals as part of their fishing process and made it clear that people who continued to use this method would be punished. The villagers said, "we have always asked the Bishop of Mandalay for anything we need. We never knew that God had given us resources in places where we live. We now know that we have our own resources and we will use them in the future".

The residents of Nant Pauk Pauk have stopped the slash-and-burn method of cultivation and are now developing a paddy field near the village. The community now knows that the environment is their responsibility and that they need to care for it wisely. Development staff like the Rev'd Samuel Zaw Seng are helping communities to care for both people's livelihoods and God's creation.



The residents of the village came to understand God's purpose for them on the earth

QUESTIONS

- › The villagers changed from old ways in order to better care for the environment. Are there any habits or routines you could change to lessen the effects of climate change?
- › The Rev'd Samuel Zaw Seng was able to show the residents of Nant Pauk Pauk the importance of the environment in God's plan. Think about how your church can encourage more people to adopt eco-friendly alternatives.
- › The villagers made drastic changes to their lifestyle. What big thing can your church do to make a real difference in the fight against climate change?

PSALM 8

- 1** O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- 2** Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- 3** When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
- 4** what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
- 5** Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
- 6** You have given them dominion over the works of your
hands; you have put all things under their feet,
- 7** all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
- 8** the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
- 9** O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

QUESTIONS

- › Look at verses 5-6. What is your understanding of the responsibility that God has given to humankind?
- › “Out of the mouths of babes and infants”. How does this passage relate to the current wave of activism that young people are involved in? What can churches learn from young people?
- › In what ways do you and your church “strive to safeguard the integrity of creation”? How can this Fifth Mark of Mission be integrated into your church’s existing mission strategy?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the gift of creation, a token of Your love and goodness towards us.

Forgive us as we have failed to steward Your creation entrusted to us.

May we seek to better fulfil our duty as faithful stewards of creation.

By the Rt Rev’d Samuel San Myat Shwe, Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Yangon



Give us reverence for life and love for every creature.

ACT

Choose an environmental issue that concerns you. What small thing can you do to make a difference?

This section provides an opportunity to delve deeper into some of the themes touched upon elsewhere in this study course.

MISSIO DEI

Missio Dei is a Latin theological term that can be translated as “mission of God”. In his seminal book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, David Bosch writes that Missio Dei means “God’s activity, which embraces both the Church and the world, and in which the Church may be privileged to participate”.

Winfield Bevins elaborates on this, saying “The church is rooted in the concept of the Missio Dei, which says that there is one mission, and it is God’s mission. God is a sending God, with a desire to see humankind and Creation reconciled, redeemed, and healed. Nowhere is the mission of God better understood than in the person and work of Jesus Christ”.

➤ If the mission of the church is ‘God’s mission’, in what sense is it ‘our’ mission as a church or an individual too? Is mission something we do, something God does, or perhaps a mix of the two?

MISSION AND THE CHURCH

Both the World Council of Churches and the Second Vatican Council state that “the church is missionary by her nature”. Mission is not just a small part of what the church does. Instead, mission encompasses all church activity.

Melba Maggay, an eminent Filipina theologian, suggests that we should broaden our understanding of mission in light of the idea that everything the church does is mission. She writes that “witness to the Kingdom requires more than preachers; it demands the whole Body of Christ to be visibly present in all areas of human life”. This reflects the multi-faceted nature of mission outlined in the Five



God is a sending
God

Marks of Mission throughout this study guide.

Emphasising the missionary, outward-looking nature of the Church, Archbishop William Temple famously said that “the Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members”.

Do you think of church as missional in nature? How

➤ could your church become more missional?

To what extent is the church for people ‘inside’

➤ and for people ‘outside’?

MISSION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Janice Price writes that, “From the very earliest church, the household of God has embraced diversity and crossed cultures. Pentecost was a multi-cultural and cross-cultural gathering. God’s mission through the Holy Spirit has always been and is today about breaking down barriers erected by human beings and human systems”.

➤ How do you understand the role of the Holy Spirit in mission work? Do you feel guided by the Holy Spirit in your everyday life?

SENSITIVE MISSION

Speaking at the 150th anniversary of the Anglican Church in Japan, Archbishop Rowan Williams illustrated the insensitive way in which mission has historically been done, saying: “In many contexts the Christian mission arrived not only wearing heavy shoes but ready to tread on as many feet as possible. Perhaps mission is truly effective only when it comes with bare feet”. Muthuraj Swamy suggests a more sensitive approach to mission, thinking of mission as an invitation. He writes, “We are not here to do mission in a judgmental way, but to invite others to participate with us in our joy of living in Christ”.

➤ How might you feel being evangelised by people of other faiths – or if people were to impose on you their ways of doing things? What lessons can we learn from this?

➤ In a world in which many faiths sit side by side, what is the role of Christian mission? How can we speak about our faith and live it out in a way that is appropriate in the modern world?



Mission is truly effective only when it comes with bare feet

FURTHER READING

Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission
by David J. Bosch (Orbis Books)

Global Kingdom, Global People: Living Faithfully in a
Multicultural World by Melba Maggay (Langham Global
Library)

Witnessing Together: Global Anglican Perspectives on
Evangelism and Witness by Muthuraj Swamy (Forward
Movement)

Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and
Prophetic Dialogue by Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans (SCM
Press)

Life-Widening Mission: Global Anglican Perspectives by Cathy
Ross (Regnum Books)

Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today by
Stephan B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder (Orbis Books)

World-Shaped Mission: Reimagining Mission Today by Janice
Price (Church House Publishing)





USPG is the Anglican mission agency that partners churches and communities worldwide in God's mission to enliven faith, strengthen relationships, unlock potential and champion justice. Founded 1701.

USPG has three strategic aims: Rethinking Mission, Energising Church and Community and Championing Justice. We bring people together from different parts of the global Church in mutually enriching conversation and profound encounters, to deepen faith in Jesus Christ. We strive to make connections between the churches of the Anglican Communion to deepen bonds of affection and learn from each other in rich exchange. We promote education and leadership and strengthen the unity and capacity of the Anglican Church. We also accompany Anglican churches across the world as they form communities of hope and resistance in the struggles associated with climate change, migration, gender, the human rights of indigenous people and inter-religious living.

If you would like to find out more about USPG or perhaps get involved as a volunteer, please visit our website at www.uspg.org.uk

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