

Set my People Free: The Call of the Church against Human Trafficking

'The Lord said, "I have seen the suffering of my people"... Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Let my people go...' (Exodus 3:7a, 5:1b)

Preamble

We, a group of 52 Church leaders from 29 member churches of the Anglican Communion, including Primates, Bishops, clergy and laity, met from 30 January to 2 February 2023 in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, for the 4th Triennial International Consultation of the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG). Our consultation was hosted by the Anglican Church of Tanzania, and took as its theme 'Set My People Free: The Call of the Church against Human Trafficking'.

The choice of Tanzania as the context of our meeting was significant, given the important advances that Tanzania (as a source, transit and destination country for trafficking) has made in recent years in combating human trafficking. Our understanding of human trafficking as a form of modern slavery was further deepened through our immersion visit to Zanzibar, which was a hub of the historical East African Slave Trade.

The visit offered participants an opportunity to grapple with the enduring complexities of the missional history of the Anglican Communion's member churches. We recognise that right across the world this history is intertwined with complex legacies of slavery which variously affect diverse groups of people. These include the descendants of the enslaved alongside those who traded and benefitted directly and indirectly from the labour of the enslaved, as well as those whose lands were colonised and those who through violence and genocide seized others' land, displacing local populations and cultures.

Within the context of worship, fellowship, bible studies and exposure visits we had the opportunity to listen to and learn from wide-ranging experiences and expertise covering historical and contemporary instances of humanity's inhumanity to itself.

We offer this communique in a spirit of prayer, praise, penitence and a growing realisation of the need for partnership. We offer this as an affirmation of our faith and as an acknowledgement of the complexity around this issue, and of our willingness to act in response to God's call to proclaim 'Let my people go' in a global context of human trafficking and modern day slavery.

Affirmation

We affirm:

the inherent dignity and freedom of all human beings by virtue of being created in the image of God without exception. This common identity as co-bearers of the divine image obligates us not to distort the image of God by objectifying others and dehumanizing ourselves in the process.

that our Trinitarian faith in the God who accompanied Hagar, heard the cries of the Hebrew slaves, and whose Spirit empowered Jesus to proclaim release to the captives calls us as the Church to respond to the sin and scandal of human trafficking and modern slavery from a premise of solidarity.

that we need to listen to and learn from survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery within our communities and to work in partnership with them, guided by their voices which are rooted in lived experience.

that the proper context of human flourishing is justice at both the individual and institutional levels. This requires building and strengthening just institutions that will allow all people to strive for the good life with and for others, and calls us to ministries which are pastoral, prophetic and public in nature.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge:

the need for the Church to examine its past and repent of its historic and continuing complicity in the enslavement of people and to recognise that addressing issues of complicity requires churches to understand that Christian discipleship necessitates active engagement with structural as well as personal transformation.

that our current global systems mirror the imperialism of the past which was founded on the exploitation of people and the planet. These systems exacerbate the root causes of human trafficking and modern slavery, including through economic and social inequality, political instability, ethnic conflicts, and climate change, and connect them to such persisting questions as racism, classism and the exploitation of Indigenous peoples.

that centuries of exploitation and plunder have contributed to the global displacement of people, leaving them vulnerable to being trafficked and enslaved in their search for a better life.

that though many local churches and their wider communities have been involved in addressing the challenges of human trafficking and modern, there is need to build further on these efforts to effectively combat human trafficking and modern slavery.

that the calamitous and continuing legacies of slavery, as well as their entanglement with modern forms of slavery, entail lost lives and identities, broken families, destroyed childhoods, exploited bodies and long-lasting trauma, all of which necessitate responses that encompass reparation, accountability, reconciliation and restoration.

that any response to human trafficking and modern slavery must reflect deep awareness of the gendered nature of human trafficking and modern slavery which frequently affects women and children disproportionately. Gendered aspects of

trafficking display and replicate modes of thinking that instrumentalize women and children and deprive them of autonomy and agency.

that the global contexts of human trafficking and modern slavery are extremely complex and diverse, thereby necessitating deep attentiveness to local realities, legislation, and mechanisms of redress so that responses to this issue are life-affirming, and can protect, preserve and promote the safety and dignity of survivors.

Action: Our commitment

We are united in believing that now is the time for churches to act in ways that are collaborative, courageous and compassionate to address the injustice of human trafficking and modern slavery.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to the following actions:

As individual delegates we commit to:

learn more about human trafficking and modern slavery and their associated complexities and consequences.

take responsibility for raising awareness of the issue in our own households, churches, and communities.

We urge our churches to:

work together intentionally as member churches across the Anglican Communion to address human trafficking and modern slavery.

promote and develop best practices for working towards actively eliminating human trafficking and modern slavery and to strengthen awareness within churches of effective policies.

educate and train congregations to be watchful and attentive to their contexts, to equip them to read the signs of human trafficking and modern slavery and be sensitive to practices that may be occurring within their own communities, and to ensure that congregations are aware of safe methods to report concerns to the relevant authorities.

commit to being places of sanctuary and safety for all people and to provide appropriate spiritual, emotional and practical support to survivors.

adopt and implement the guidelines set out by the Anglican Communion Safe Church Commission.

engage with governments on legislation and policies to address the economic, commercial and environmental factors which lead to individuals and communities being more vulnerable to human trafficking.

work alongside enforcement agencies to bring perpetrators to account.

work collaboratively with a wide range of partners including survivors with lived experience, civil society organisations, ecumenical and inter-faith partners in addressing human trafficking and modern slavery, focussing on both preventive and restorative measures.

As USPG we commit ourselves to:

develop relevant theological resources and facilitate the promotion and creation of networks and resources to support the work of the Anglican Communion

Appreciation

We wish to express our deep gratitude to the Anglican Church of Tanzania and to the Diocese of Dar es Salaam for graciously hosting us, for their considerable support with transport arrangements and logistics, and for the opportunities to worship in local churches and to deepen our understanding of the local context and culture, especially through the visit to the Cathedrals in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. We would like to thank all those who contributed to the Consultation in their capacity as speakers, presenters, bible study leaders and interpreters and through leading worship; and to all the members of the USPG Communion Wide Advisory Group, staff and Trustees, for their support.

We give thanks to God for the opportunity to come together to share in fellowship and prayer, and to deepen our understanding of what God is calling us to as leaders and representatives of the churches and member churches of the Anglican Communion. Grounded in this fellowship, we commit to ensuring that the aspirations of this Consultation are taken forward across all our member churches as we fulfil God's call, individually and collectively, to 'Set your people free'.

*The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night.
(Exodus 13:21)*

Signed by Primates and representatives of the following member churches and USPG

The Most Revd Juan David Alvarado

Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America

The Most Revd Marinez Santos Bassotto

Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil

The Most Revd Albert Chama

The Church of the Province of Central Africa

The Most Revd Leonard Dawea
The Most Revd Dr Howard Gregory

The Most Revd Michael Lewis

The Most Revd Samuel Sunil Mankhin
The Most Revd Carlos Simao Matsinhe

The Most Revd Dr Maimbo Mndolwa
The Most Revd Linda Nicholls
The Most Revd Stephen Than Myint Oo
The Most Revd Dharmaraj Rasalam
The Most Revd James R. Wong Yin Song

The Most Revd Mark Strange
Obispo Maximo Rhee Timbang
The Rt Revd Alexander Kobina Asmah

The Rt Revd Sameer Khimla
The Rt Revd Eddie Moral
The Rt Revd Danald Jute

Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath
The Very Reverend Dr Sarah Rowland Jones
The Venerable Emad Basilios

The Revd Canon Titus Ho-Wook Kim
The Revd Joseph Chow
The Revd Chris Frazer

Ms Tomie Kaneko

Ms Pachi Zabala

Mr Nagulan Nesiah

The Revd Dr Duncan Dormor

In attendance

The Rt Revd Derek Kamukwamba

The Very Revd Orisi Vuki

Ven Dr Rienze Perera

The Anglican Church of Melanesia
The Church of the Province of the West Indies
The Province of the Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East
The Church of Bangladesh
Igreja Anglicana de Mocambique e Angola
The Anglican Church of Tanzania
The Anglican Church of Canada
The Church of the Province of Myanmar
The Church of South India
The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean
The Scottish Episcopal Church
Iglesia Filipina Independiente
The Church of the Province of West Africa
The Church of North India
The Episcopal Church in the Philippines
The Church of the Province of South East Asia
The Church of England
The Church in Wales
The Episcopal/Anglican Province of Alexandria
The Anglican Church of Korea
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui
The Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
The Nippon Sei Ko Kai (The Anglican Communion in Japan)
The Anglican Church of South America

The Church of Ceylon

United Society Partners in the Gospel

The Church of the Province of Central Africa
The Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia
The Church of Ceylon

The Revd Canon Wadie Far	The Province of the Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East
The Revd Dr Michael Clarke	The Church of the Province of the West Indies
Mrs Esther Kazimani-Pale	Igreja Anglicana de Mocambique e Angola
The Ven. Kofi deGraft-Johnson	General Secretary, CAPA
Dr Agnes Aboum	Anglican Church of Kenya, former Moderator, World Council of Churches
Mr Joel Kelling	Anglican Alliance, The Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East
The Revd Moses Matonya	General Secretary, Christian Council of Tanzania
The Rt Revd Jackson Sosthenes	Diocese of Dar es Salaam, Anglican Church of Tanzania
The Rt Revd Dickson Chilongani	Diocese of Dodoma, Anglican Church of Tanzania
The Rt Revd Elias Chakupewa	Diocese of Tabora, Anglican Church of Tanzania
Canon Bethuel Mlula	Provincial Secretary, Anglican Church of Tanzania
The Revd Jacob Kahemele	Dean St Alban's Cathedral, Diocese of Dar es Salaam

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Interpreters: The Revd Warren Wilson, Dr Paulo Ueti, Ms Rachel Weller.

Guest Speakers:

Hon Dr Philip Isdor Mpango, Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Dr James Kofi Annan, Founder and President of Challenging Heights, Accra Ghana.

Dr Anna Peter Makakala, Commissioner General of Immigration of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Prof. Palamagamba John Aidan Mwaluko Kabudi, Tanzanian lawyer and former Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Godfrey Mpandikizi, Executive Director of Tanzania Anti Human Trafficking and Legal Initiative (TATLI).

Ken Heriel, Project Assistant, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Tanzania.