

Anglican Communion Consultation on Evangelism and Church Growth

(St Andrew's House, 9 - 11 February 2009)

Introduction

Right from the first ACC-1 meeting in Kenya, Mission and Evangelism has been an important strand of the work of the Anglican Communion Office. Evangelism was particularly emphasised during the Decade of Evangelism and through the Commissions. In preparing for the 2008 Lambeth Conference, the Office of Mission and Evangelism at the Anglican Communion carried out a survey on mission and evangelism issues around the Communion and produced a booklet, *Holistic Mission*. Out of this report many Self Select Sessions were prepared for the bishops and the spouses at the Lambeth Conference.

The Anglican understanding of mission is holistic as affirmed within the Five Marks of Mission.¹ As evangelism is an integral part of mission, and not separate from it, it was agreed by the recent Joint Standing Committee meeting (November 2008) that in future the office should be known as the 'Mission Office' and not the 'Mission and Evangelism Office'. To make sure that the emphasis upon evangelism was not lost, the Joint Standing Committee requested the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion to establish a 'network' of evangelism and church growth.² This resolution by the Joint Standing Committee followed the aspirations and desire of the Bishops at the 2008 Lambeth Conference "to develop a worldwide vision and strategy of church planting, growth and mission".³

The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, invited a small but diverse group of people involved in evangelism and church growth ministries, from around the Communion, to a short consultation from 9-11 February 2009 to discuss this proposal and make recommendations to ACC-14. The group began this meeting by sharing their personal faith experiences and the ways in which they have been involved in the ministry of evangelism and church growth.

Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative:

Although the Joint Standing Committee's resolution was to set up a 'network' and affirming that the word 'Network' is commonly understood within the Communion, it was agreed that not all are comfortable with the use of this word. It was also noted that unlike the existing Anglican Networks, the Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative needs be staffed within the Mission Office.

¹ The **Five Marks of Mission** 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 strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

² **RESOLUTION 2: MISSION DESK AT THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION OFFICE** THAT the Joint Standing Committee of the Primates of the Anglican Communion and the Anglican consultative Council.....encourage the Secretary General to proceed with the setting up of an Evangelism and Church Growth Network.

³ "We acknowledge the growth of the Church in areas of the southern hemisphere and the many fresh expressions of church in the whole Communion. At the same time we are called as a Communion to develop a worldwide vision and strategy of church planting, growth, and mission. While we encourage these strategies we must be conscious of those diocese and provinces which are yet to achieve self-sufficiency and respond in appropriate ways to address the areas of need." P.13 and paragraph 42 (**Programmatic concerns**) of 'Lambeth Indaba'.

The group therefore agreed that the word 'Initiative' rather than 'Network' would be more appropriate. In this regard 'Initiative' refers to the open association of people that would encourage maximum participation. 'Initiative' does not only imply the dynamic required to implement the mandate, to effectively develop vision and strategy, in a way that 'network' may not, but also implies a time-limited programme that will be reviewed from time to time, with a possibility of maturing into something even more dynamic! Thus, Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative (ECGI).

Purpose:

The purpose of the Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative is to promote evangelism and church growth throughout the Anglican Communion.

This purpose needs to be seen in the context of the commitment to holistic mission outlined in the Anglican Communion's five marks of mission, and is intended to enhance collaborative work and mutual support in evangelism and church growth in parishes, dioceses and provinces of the Anglican Communion, in order to bring people to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and become life long disciples within the community of God's people.

This purpose will be achieved by:

- Facilitating prayer and mutual encouragement
- Developing strategies to reach unreached peoples
- Recommending resources & sharing good practice
- Encouraging training in E&CG for the whole people of God
- Sharing stories, news and strategies
- Identifying key issues for specific consultation
- Building links with other E&CG networks within and beyond the Anglican Communion.

Stakeholders:

It is anticipated that ECGI will aim for 'maximum participation' through an open network (facilitated by web-based, paper and oral communication) but with a small Core Group of **animators** to serve as an implementing group and to support the focal person (to be based at the ACO or elsewhere).

Therefore participants will include appropriate people in provinces, dioceses, mission agencies and other evangelism and church growth initiatives within the Communion, while noting that those on the ground who have stories are not always those who can make and drive strategy, or indeed have access to communication facilities.

It is expected that while relating to and working under the Anglican Communion Mission Desk and appropriate collaboration with other Communion networks, the ECGI, in pursuant with its vision, will need to work in collaboration with Anglican mission bodies such as, Alpha Programme, Anglican Frontier Mission, Anglimergent, Church Army, CMS, USPG, and also relate to ecumenical bodies such as World Evangelical Alliance (Mission Commission), WCC (Evangelism Desk), World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Mission & Unity), Lausanne Committee, 5015 Vision Network, Nigerian Evangelical Mission Alliance (NEMA), Faith2Share, Internet Evangelism, etc.

The group identified the sharing of stories and experiences as one of the major activities of the ECGI and recognised the internet as a major tool in facilitating this aim and need. It was therefore felt that the use of the internet will be key to achieving the purpose of the Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative, bearing in mind that

there are many in the Communion for whom access to the internet is both costly and limited, the need to use other forms of communication is necessary.

Theological Basis

Within the rich diversity of the Communion a biblical and theological basis for Evangelism and Church Growth will need to be developed.

Way Forward:

The Mission Desk is to:

- assess and identify evangelism and church growth initiatives and potential participants in the Communion;
- share information about this meeting;
- request the Secretary General to:
 - ensure a theological basis for evangelism and church growth is developed;
 - report to ACC 14 in May;
 - make a press release about this meeting;
 - appoint a Core Group of animators;
 - appoint a focal person to be based at the ACO.

APPENDIX:

Consultation Attendance List

Mr. John Clark	UK (Chair)
Bishop Moon Hing	West Malaysia (South East Asia)
Bishop Patrick Yu	Toronto (Canada)
Bishop Bill Godfrey	Peru (Southern Cone)
Revd Canon Mark Oxbrow	Faith2Share/CMS
Philip Johanson	Church Army International
Revd Canon Lovey Kitembo	SOMA (Uganda)
Dr Julian Linnel	Anglican Frontier Mission (USA)
Mr. Stuart Buchanan	ACO Staff
Revd John Kafwanka	ACO Staff
Revd Canon Kenneth Kearon	ACO Secretary General