

EDUCATION AND THE FAMILY

EDITORIAL

This newsletter starts with a plea from Sudan for the lost treasure of education – lost through war and poverty. Other children lose out because of family breakdown, or, in parts of the world, because they are girls.

The importance of the family in providing a secure basis for educational development is emphasised in many of the articles. Where the family is not strong, some of the projects in the Western world seek to help and encourage parents as well as children, aiming to give confidence and new skills. Important too, is the involvement of parents in school and the benefits this can have for the children and the older members – fathers as well as mothers.

But it is in the developing world that the problem is most acute. Lack of government resources to provide

schools and equipment, with the poverty of parents meaning the gap is not filled, result in the heart-rending letters from individuals begging for funds to enable them to stay at school to further their education. Many statistics show the fallacy of the view, traditional in some countries, that the education of girls is of lesser importance than that of boys. The results in unwanted pregnancies, increased child mortality and a cycle of poverty are clear. Work is being done by churches and other organisations: a Mothers' Union project seeks to empower women through literacy; many dioceses fund schools for girls and boys and have vigorous educational outreach. The need was made clear by an Anglican Bishop writing of his work in Zambia. He states "For the first time this year we had printed service sheets, and often in a congregation of over two hundred adults and youth, I was surprised to see that less than ten were able to use them." He goes on to

describe how "in some villages we stayed in school classrooms, and it was common to see windows without glass, broken doors, and occasionally only two teachers struggling to teach in schools of some 200 children in seven classes."

A recent announcement by the UK Government that it will provide funds to speed the introduction of universal primary education in Commonwealth countries is welcome, so is the international campaign to relieve international debt and so release more funds for educational provision in the poorest countries. The importance of education can be partly forgotten by those for whom there is adequate government provision, or who can afford alternatives: we need to hear the voices of those for whom it is more important than gold and listen to the plea that Churches should place education higher on their agenda.

Education, the key to life on earth, is what the children of South Sudan have been robbed of and many of them are so furious because they have been denied the key of knowledge. The ongoing civil war in Sudan has created an atmosphere of division, class crisis and hatred among the Sudanese people, as it looks as if their right to peace, freedom and education is a forgotten issue by the outside world and the super powers.

Many families in southern Sudan can't meet the school requirements for their children, as they live below poverty lines. This war has turned out to be enemy number one for students and teachers as they face compulsory recruitment into the army. For them war is a nightmare, but now an incurable disease. The search for education has led many students into neighbouring countries and to seek asylum overseas. To get a gold is cheaper than to be educated for the children of this vast African nation.

Every time I travel into Southern Sudan, it is full of new experience: the experience of sadness, war tragedies, natural disasters, and faces of sorrow. The future of our country remains unpredictable. I have seen those who are desperate for education, food and peace. I have seen the efforts of Anglican churches and other denominations creating schools to fight illiteracy, but they lack funds and protection to maintain such institutions. Their spiritual guidance is appreciated and the faith of the Sudanese people is at the forefront in the Anglican Communion.

The key factor contributing to the downfall of female students is early pregnancy caused by poverty and lack of encouragement from the family. Girls are being considered as a source of income to the family in many areas, hindering their right to education. Here the Church has a big role to play in society. Sunday school lessons for children are another way forward and hope for those who go to church, but will the situation let this happen? What about the fear of war? Where will peace come from? Who will answer the children of Sudan?

I work for a Christian organisation as a Gender Advisor in Southern Sudan. In most of my encounters, education is the main gender issue. Cultural and traditional beliefs, coupled with the civil wars, play a major role in exploiting the right for education amongst the young generation. Girls are the victims of these circumstances: they are given away in marriage at a tender age, or kept at home to look after their younger brothers and sisters. Most parents are sceptical about sending their girls to school, fearing that they will be raped and turned into prostitutes. In other areas where girls have access to education, they drop out of school because the family cannot afford to pay for all the children, hence the fees will be used for the boys. This phenomenon has made most mothers

believe that education is for boys while girls are to be protected for marriage.

It is shocking to see the Church that was once the pioneer of girls' education in Southern Sudan, not doing much on this important mission. Yes, the Church in Sudan is growing, but its mission is incomplete without education. The Church needs the women who constitute 75% of its congregations to be enlightened and educated. The future effective women's leadership in the Church depends on the education of the current girl child. I admit that the Church in Southern Sudan does not have the necessary resources, but I want to affirm that God has given us land, trees and skilled people who are able to set up infrastructures. Finally, the Church needs to recruit committed Anglican educationists to restructure its education programme and use whatever resources available (locally or externally) for the promotion of this important ministry.

We thank God that even in a situation that sounds hopeless, He has made it possible for his children in refuge to access education – the Church should not take that as an excuse. We want to thank God for the assurance of the Rainbow, and I pray that out of this article, and through IAFN, the Church in Sudan will awaken to redress its teaching ministry. This I wrote from the depth of my heart as a Southern Sudanese woman.

One of the most critical issues in the education sector in much of Sub-Saharan African countries is the urgency to increase primary school enrolment of girls. Kenya is no exception to this important call. In Kenya, as is common in a number of African countries, the practice of prenatal sex selection, higher rates of mortality among very young girls, lower rates of school enrolment for girls as compared to boys, suggest that “son preference” is curtailing the access for girl children to education and health care. The lower rates of female school enrolment and the higher rates of female dropout at earlier grades are due in large measures to high demand for girls to help in domestic work, such as caring for younger siblings, fetching water and firewood. Caring for younger siblings is particularly prevalent among girls aged 6-9 years – an age at which they should attend primary school. Once they have missed that, their chance to receive any schooling is almost inevitably lost forever. These girls are likely to remain in the low-education, low-income, low-status, high-fertility trap.

The gender gap in education has a high cost. Many studies reveal that the amount of education attained by girls and women is an important determinant of children's health and nutrition. For instance, a recent study conducted in 45 developing countries found that the average mortality rate for children under 5 was 144 per 1,000 live births when their mother had no education, 106 per 1,000 when they had primary education only, and 68 per 1,000 when they had some secondary education.

A recent study in Kenya indicated that, among both men and women, contraceptive use is higher in urban than in rural areas. The differential in use by level of education is striking. Less than 20 per cent of married women with no education are using some method of family planning, compared to 35 per cent users from those who have completed primary education, and 52 per cent users from those with some secondary education. This again underscores the

importance of education.

The value of girl children to both their family and society needs to be expanded beyond their definition as potential “child-bearers” and/or “caretakers” and reinforced through the adoption and implementation of educational and social policies that encourage their full participation in the development of the society in which they live.

Improving the economic and social status of women is critical to overcoming the constraints imposed on them by their traditional roles that perpetuate high fertility. This entails, among other things, recognising and emphasising that women's status also derives from their *economic* contributions to family, community and society. It requires expanding the range of opportunities available to them and supporting developments that provide women with greater control over their own lives and the output and income generated from their work. These include greater educational opportunities, removal of discriminatory laws, opening up new employment and income-earning opportunities.

The Church has pioneered education and health services in most African cultures and Kenya is no exception. To this end, the Church's current activities in providing health services, and promoting life-skill training, civic education and informal education is commendable and should be encouraged.

Seven years ago, I was posted after ordination to start a parish in one of the worst African poverty-stricken slums on the outskirts of Nairobi, called “Korogocho” which means a dumping site. Life had to change for me dramatically by convincing my wife and two children to live in a tin-roofed and mud-walled room in Korogocho. The population is about 1.5 million people in an area of two square kilometres. Residents are casual labourers,

illicit brewers, charcoal and vegetable hawkers; while most women practise prostitution to earn a living. Korogocho has no rubbish disposal system and many diseases such as malaria, malnutrition, and high rates of sexually-transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS. God sent me to such a place to start a ministry with the needy and neglected children.

My first step was to befriend any child I came across through whom I could penetrate to the families in Korogocho. There were so many children not going to school: some were orphans; others were street children who could not locate either parent; others were from extremely poor families. There I was in the middle of deep darkness and hopelessness.

The first concern was for the orphans who were suffering bitterly: no clothing, no education, no proper food. Others slept in the cold because they were staying with a distant relative who could not care a lot, or because of a slight nuisance the child had committed. I invited pastors from other churches and we formed a Korogocho discipleship fellowship, calling it Vision Peoples in Mission. With my fellow clergy and other well-wishers, we started a nursery school with a feeding programme for these destitute children in my church treasurer's one room. We were also supported by a former Church Missionary Society liaison officer.

Year by year, God started proving to us that we are in His complete divine will. People visited our destitute children, and, with the help of friends, we managed to buy a plot of land and built a six-classroomed school, naming it Korogocho Sunrise School. We now have over 100 destitute children with five classes and seven volunteer staff. The children are given curricular education and one meal a day. There are many other children who need our Christian love, but we do not have the capacity to help them. The children need sponsorship to better their future. We have three children who have passed through Sunrise and were lucky to get sponsorship to secondary schools, and we are very proud to hear from the Headteachers that our children are among the best.

The aim of Vision Peoples in Mission is to encourage Korogocho people to realise that they, in part by their own efforts, can be rescued from their plight. We invite partnership in Mission with anybody to be part of the efforts we are making to reach out in the love of Christ to Africa's poorest poor.

BURUNDI

living such as giving health education, fighting against cultural elements which oppress women. The consequences will be the reduction of mortality rate, the increase of the production and income of families and finally will raise the status of women and integrate them in the development planning of our country. Someone said "educating a man is only educating one person, but educating a woman is educating the whole society." By educating women, the Mothers' Union will have contributed to the improvement of the whole society and to the protection of future generations.

The Mothers' Union Literacy Project

Burundi is among the underdeveloped countries whose rate of illiteracy for women is very high. Some 67% are illiterate and many live off agriculture using archaic tools and old technology. The need for education is tremendous to change and improve that way of living.

But the best way to heal an illness is first to know it. The question we should first raise is "Why is the situation like this?"

There are many factors that contributed to the illiteracy of women. Among them are socio-cultural constraints, financial problems, lack of motivation and even unconsciousness of the need. Indeed, a traditional woman should not appear and speak in public, therefore it is useless for her to go to school; what is important for her is to get married. And because of financial problems, the priority is given to boys. For others, they are not motivated because they see that very few women have access to high responsibility and they drop out after primary school to help their mothers.

In a situation like this, one is to understand how important and hopeful is the Mothers' Union Literacy Project whose aim is the empowerment of women, through literacy, to bring about social change towards a more equitable society and to reach a sustainable development.

We organise women in small circles of about 20 persons. We help them to choose local facilitators familiar to them and local committees to lead the circles. After the groups are organised, we help them to identify their needs and their priorities. It is wonderful to see how the women are active, how they express their points of view, and how they share their experiences in order to improve what has gone wrong. It is a real functional literacy and an ongoing education.

So the Mothers' Union Literacy Project is very important for families in Burundi, in so far as it will improve the way of

UGANDA

Although education has now been in Uganda for over a century, it is a more treasurable commodity in Africa than anything one could imagine in this world. Education was introduced in Uganda by the early Anglican missionaries. The formal education was categorised into three: 1. Religion; 2. Reading; 3. Writing; -the three "Rs".

Since then, the education system in Uganda has been revolutionised. Today, we have several educational institutions all over the country. Many are founded on the Anglican faith, while others are of government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Many are too expensive to attend, for a child who is a beginner pays over £85 a term.

One of the many NGOs in Uganda involved in active education is Buddu Social Development Association (BUSODA). BUSODA has established over 20 educational centres in Uganda to provide basic education to the most needy rural children, the majority AIDS orphans. Education in Uganda is nowadays an expensive commodity. BUSODA, to continue our humanitarian educational struggles, relies on faithfuls like those reading this to support us financially.

ZAMBIA

Historically, the Christian missionaries brought formal education to Zambia. There are many Christian denominations active in evangelism and these established Mission Stations, around which many

primary schools were built. Hence education and evangelism were run concurrently by the missionaries who, before Independence in October 1964, were leading educationists. However, after Independence, many sponsoring Mission Societies abroad felt that the new Government would take over the running of Mission-schools as well. This has since been proved erroneous, because the Church Ministry in Zambia in particular, and Africa in general, is without the provision of social services like education, health, agriculture. Christianity is the dominant religion in Zambia. Education was the means of enlightenment by which the pioneer missionaries converted particularly school-going-age youths to Christianity. Many learnt how to read and write for the purpose of understanding the Bible and spreading the Gospel. From this cadre of literate people were developed preachers of the Word and teachers under the supervision and assistance of the European Missionaries.

Traditionally, formal education was considered all right for boys but seen as unproductive for girls. The missionaries had a tough time breaking this prejudice. The fallacy inherent in this line of reasoning took long to expose. In fact to this day it persists, though not strongly. In Zambia's rural areas, subsistence farming is still the pre-occupation of the population; and girls are seen as the backbone of the rural subsistence economy. The school calendar is drawn with a view to allow children in rural areas to be with their parents during the planting season. It is said that great nations are founded upon great families. The education by the missionaries endeavored to impart the Christian virtues. This could be the main reason why Zambia is "the island of peace" in the Southern African region.

The general malaise in the economy has rendered the Government incapable of providing an acceptable standard of education. There is a determined cry to have the mission-run schools re-established for guaranteed high standards. However, the churches have now concentrated on their core role of evangelism. All the Christian churches are now locally funded and are subject to the overall under-performing economy. There is a thrust to re-link with the European churches to improve the capability for delivery of social services such as education, health, agriculture and community development. The Missionary Church built a solid foundation in education and goodwill. Modern Christians have an imperative duty to follow this through.

The Government is working hard to develop education policies that will reverse this situation, whereby it was thought that it did not matter if girl children did not go to school. For example, girls are now admitted in the once boys-only secondary schools. Traditional chiefs are not only encouraging their subjects to send and allow their daughters to complete education but even punish those who withdraw them from school for early marriages.

Availability of schools and school places is less of a problem in urban areas than in the

countryside. In the rural areas, the first problem is that of longer distances from home to school. Most catchment areas extend well beyond 5 km radius from the nearest school. Secondly, most of the schools have classes only up to Grade 4 or if they are lucky to Grade 7. Those who qualify to proceed to Grade 8 have to find a relative in town where most schools are day schools, or find a place in boarding schools where fees are extremely high for the unemployed rural dwellers.

All head teachers attend education management courses. Some of the

modules in such courses deal with school-parent relationships. Schools now open their doors for parents to discuss with teachers about their children. Parents are encouraged to check their children's exercise books and monitor their progress.

Most churches in Zambia have schools and in fact these are better run than most government ones, mainly because of the commitment of managers and staff. Apart from the already established schools, churches can still work with the communities to build more, especially in the countryside.

People are not difficult to mobilise; all they need is to show them that the Church cares as much for education as it does for evangelism. The Anglican Diocese of Lusaka is working towards the establishment of a community school in one rural parish of the Southern Province. Once the community translates its will in real practical terms, the Government will support such efforts. Though it is a hard road to travel, the Church has an obligation to put education on its priority list.



AUSTRALIA

Australian society, like much of the First World, is marked by incessant change.

Family life is not so much breaking down, but today's multiple forms and styles, the sheer pace of life, a growing inequality of income and a cry for values and safety by parents, gives the Church a fresh opportunity. We stand not in Jerusalem's synagogue rooted in Scripture but on the Areopagus surrounded by masses who hardly know of Jesus.

Globalisation reinforces our common troubles – bullying in schools, boys' failure to achieve academically, suicide (Sydney has the world's highest youth suicide rate), anti-intellectualism, drugs and the fast growing poor-rich divide. (Yes! All family issues!)

But the positives are great. In the face of anarchy and fear, Australian families increasingly voice their concerns. Educators and politicians are slowly listening. The call to values is being integrated into the school curriculum. Some are drifting back with their children to church and Christian youth communities are growing.

Anglican Youthworks was incorporated by Sydney four years ago. Its five Divisions and College have a multiplex strategic plan, but its strategic purpose is to strengthen

churches (and schools) to transform lives for Christ. A key theme is integrating church, school and family. New resources build on inter-generational needs.

Australians are increasingly favouring values-based schooling for their children. Over the last decade the percentage in independent non-government schools has grown from 26% to nearly 32%. The Diocese of Sydney has started a low fee school system. Country Dioceses and Metropolitan Sees have begun new schools. The Diocese of Perth (Western Australia) has a number of new secondary schools integrated with the planting of new community-based churches and chaplaincy. Anglican Youthworks is committed to producing first-class Bible resources for independent, Christian and government classrooms, and increasingly its submissions to government are impacting policy. One Australian Bishop commented, "A growing church must invest in children." Sadly many churches spend more each year on the organ pipes than on their children.

Youthworks has invested heavily in *Under Construction* to resource churches with a contemporary children's ministry tool right for today's boys and girls. *Under Construction* moves from the old Sunday Classroom model to an innovative

relational format with fun and has an integrated Bible curriculum. The All Age component makes worship relevant. 500 churches have used the product for just 4 weeks – a small outer suburban church reported "We love *Under Construction*. It is so good our kids love coming to church for the first time."

Finally our Anglican Education Commission has commissioned a sample questionnaire to be included in the National Church Life Survey in Australia, the United Kingdom and USA in May 2001. This will provide qualitative and quantitative data with reference to faith development through life. What are the significant ministries? Who are the significant teachers and models? How can we better impact families with the good news of Jesus Christ handing on well from generation to generation, family to family?

Exciting times await a faithful church. But faithfulness demands we seize the intergenerational opportunity and invest right.



Recently an Australian publication light-heartedly looked at the still treasured words of advice given by mothers to their daughters. These ranged from "never trust a man with a moustache" to "blue and green should never be seen". Though we sometimes shudder to hear it, we catch ourselves echoing our parents in dealing with our own children. Such is the power of the family. But over recent decades, confidence in the value of the family's role in education has declined.

Although Australians are extremely cynical about governments and politicians, we look to legislation to protect us from ourselves. Whenever a problem arises, the community expects the Government and its "expert advisors" to solve it.

Nowhere is this more evident than in our education system. Over the years the traditional domains of the family have been surrendered to the schools. Schools have been called upon to educate against the evils of graffiti, binge drinking and unsafe sex. The teaching of "values" rather than traditional religious education is now being

are being urged to read to their sons to model literacy. It has been suggested that the family rather than the school or clinical psychologist is the solution to the problem. Children whose parents read to them and who learn poems and songs off by heart are found to be less likely to have ADDS. This view runs counter to current educational practice that discounts the memorisation of text in favour of understanding concepts and problem-solving.

Yet children are natural ritualists, as any parent who has tried to skip a sentence of a bedtime story will testify. They have a tremendous capacity for memorisation. If not utilised, the vacuum will be filled by content of dubious value. Anglicans, of all people, with their prayer book tradition should be wary of fashions that diminish the memorisation of Scripture, psalms, creeds and prayers. These have provided families with truths to live by and eternal hope.



NEW ZEALAND

In South Auckland, the Anglican Trust for Women and Children (ATWC) offers a range of social service programmes, each with a strong family education content. All of the Trust's work has as its primary focus the strengthening of the family unit – whatever the model of family. The surrounding population is representative of a wide range of ethnicities, and this contributes substantially to a variety of family structures.

ATWC is a small social service agency, with twenty-seven staff, many part-time. Our social service programmes are utilised by around 400 families each year.

Some examples of our programmes:

- **For families of behaviour-disordered boys aged 8-12yrs**

At St Mary's Family Centre, the boys and their parents and siblings participate in regular family therapy. During that time the boys reside at a residential school on a coastal farm, some distance away. They return to their families for weekends and school holidays. In family therapy, the families are able to identify problem areas in their personal relationships and family systems, and to explore strategies for dealing with these. In the school, the boys are helped to achieve their academic potential, which is generally far higher than their current attainment levels. In the residential setting, the focus is upon strengthening their social skills – particularly on their learning to

cope with conflicts and frustrations, and to interact with other children and adults co-operatively. We do not set out to highlight and remedy failures and weaknesses but join with our clients in building upon existing strengths, and enabling them to acquire new skills.

- **A residential parent education programme** provides accommodation, parenting and homemaking classes, counselling and social work support, for a small resident community of mothers and their pre-school children. All are referred because of a lack of parenting and/or homemaking skills, generally accompanied by other significant problems. These combine to prevent them from maintaining a safe and healthy environment for their children. Tutors teach skills and encourage the mothers through group tutorials and in their day-to-day activities in a wide range of topics. These include child-development, child-management, family health, homemaking skills and personal relationships. Over about six months each client family progresses from a closely monitored, six-unit communal complex to one of four adjoining cottages in which they live more independently, whilst continuing to participate fully in the programme. A social worker then assists them with re-establishing themselves in the wider community, and monitors their progress for an appropriate period.

- **An autonomous child and family support service for indigenous Maori families** is also located on the St Mary's Family Centre site. ATWC provides the buildings and helps to fund this work. Among programmes offered is a second-chance education programme for Maori teenagers who have dropped out of the State's education system.

ATWC is typical of many New Zealand not-for-profit child and family support services, in that we have had to adjust from low-level early intervention work to more intensive, professionally resourced and longer-term programmes for more complex and needy families. This has been brought about over the past decade by much debated and sorely questioned Government policies of making the community responsible for its social casualties, rather than the taxpayer. The churches, not surprisingly, accept more than their fair share of that responsibility.



mooted as the answer to everything from the mugging of pensioners to the ram-raiding of liquor stores. In all this the family's role of primary educator has been undermined and undervalued.

However, change is in the wind. Recent research suggests that a stable family life is the strongest indicator for successful school performance. Further, the educational input of the home is perceived as far more crucial than the effect of the school and provides a significant domestic economy unrecognised by governments.

Of late, the literacy of boys and the related Attention Deficit Disorder Syndrome (ADDS) have been a cause of concern in Australian schools. Fathers, for so long the silent partner in the education of children,

The Lillian Vallely school

The Lillian Vallely School, the only Episcopal school for Indian children in the US, was begun by Bishop Thornton (retired Bishop of Idaho) at the request of a group of Indian elders from the Episcopal Church on the Fort Hall Reservation. They were led by Deacon Lillian Vallely, a Shoshone Indian woman, who had been ordained when she was 73 years old. The elders were concerned about their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The children were suffering from low self-esteem, getting into drugs and alcohol, falling behind in school and dropping out. (There is a 72% drop out rate.) Of those who did make it to their senior year in high school, half of them were parents. The elders knew that something needed to be done. Bishop Thornton agreed to start a school in an old brick building on the Reservation, a building where many of the grandmothers had gone to school.

We opened in 1994 with 15 children in a combined first, second, third-grade class. We then added kindergarten and fourth grade. That put us at capacity for the old building. Thanks to the generosity of a charitable foundation, we were able to purchase a 60-acre farm just off the Reservation. Work teams came from Episcopal churches across Idaho and as far away as Dallas, Texas, to help us tear down buildings and put up portable classrooms. We opened on schedule in 1999 and added a fifth grade. We had intended to send the sixth graders to a public school in town. Three weeks into the school year, our caring teachers called the students to see how they were doing. They discovered that they were staying at home! They tried that school, did not like it and refused to go back. Our teachers could not bear it. They invited the children back and incorporated them into their classrooms. Now these students and

their parents or grandparents (most of the children are being raised by single mothers or grandparents) want us to add seventh grade. Since the families are too impoverished to pay tuition, this poses financial problems.

We have excellent teachers, small classes and an Indian culture programme. A young Shoshone man teaches Indian dance, story telling and flute. (He also acts as a surrogate father for many of the children.) The Shoshoni language is taught by a Shoshone woman who also teaches bead work. We believe that by knowing their own culture, the children will be proud of who they are and will have the confidence to achieve in all areas of learning. To experience a wider world and raise their self-esteem, their dance teacher takes them off the Reservation to perform in churches and colleges. Our goal is for them to be successful in both the Indian and majority culture and to have the skills to attend any college or university in America if they wish.

It has always been our intention that Lillian Vallely School be a place of reconciliation for Indians and non-Indians. Three Indians are on our Board of Directors. Some of the parents and grandparents of the students volunteer at the school. There is a long history of broken relationships to overcome, and we pray that our mutual love of Jesus and these Indian children will begin a new history. In everything we do, we try to affirm, affirm. We want the children to know, deep in their hearts, that they are loved by God not less than any other human being.

I have enjoyed full freedom in our home, which is untypical of Indian families. However, my parents have never failed to point out responsibility when there was a need for it. We on the whole discuss together matters affecting our individual and common life. Also when guests are invited for a meal, I and my sister are always encouraged to be part of making preparation, sharing and of conversation.

My parents are keen to tell us stories of the hardship of their life in the past, even to the point of repetition. We are always reminded of being mindful of the poor people around the world, particularly in India. We are taken to the remote villages of our parents regularly so that while living in a developed situation we may grow in awareness about the developing world.

When we came to Britain in 1996 we were more or less prepared to face the culture shock and pressure of peer groups. Family prayer continued, although in due course circumstances created little gaps. The experience in the nearby comprehensive school my sister and I attended was different and there was hardly any appreciation for teenagers thinking or talking about faith and church. We were shocked by the behaviour of some of our classmates inside and outside the school. Conversations did not move away from the ambit of pop-stars, sport-stars, sex, eating and drinking. It was pitiable that many teenagers do not look to their lives beyond teenage and superficial merrymaking. At the same time I developed some sympathy towards them when I came to know that a number of them came from families of broken marriages. Towards the end of my school life I got a few friends who could understand my difficulty in such an environment and was able to share their deep problems with trust and confidence.

The university life is slightly different. Most of the students are adequately motivated for higher studies. Some of my friends are nominal Christians. They say that their families did not make efforts to provide a Christian environment. Sometimes we talk about the meaning and ultimate goal of human life. But there is no way to sustain a serious engagement in matters of faith. I am sure my experience of faith would have been very different if I had stayed in India for my higher education. Sometimes I think that having to live in a different culture and country has challenged my faith and made me think more. I have learned from my father who is a minister, scholar of religions and practitioner of interfaith dialogue, that human beings cannot live without religion or faith. The churches, instead of being carried away by the currents of the contemporary culture characterised by consumerism and individualism, must come forward setting a counter-culture, which is Gospel-friendly and community-oriented. Whatever may be the areas of special emphasis in this new culture, strengthening family life and developing spiritual homes is indispensable.

ENGLAND

with my children and finding, with them, ways of learning about the world. I quickly became involved in the school and, during their time at the school, was a parent governor, ran parenting courses and became Chair of the Parent-Teachers Association. Since we left, the school has continued to develop its partnership with parents. The Headteacher believes it is really important to emphasise to parents the importance of being involved in their own child's learning. She thinks that all parents want the best for their child – even though sometimes school and home values are different. If schools work from this premise then the partnership will work. Certainly, as a parent, I always felt welcomed and part of the school community. I have missed this involvement in the girls' schools ever since, although I have continued to help as much as I have been allowed to.

The school developed a number of ways to help promote a good working partnership. One of their booklets, written with the help of parents, is called 'How can I find out more about the school and my child's learning?' It outlines very practical ways of making parents feel involved. For example:

- Parents are expected to bring children into class and settle their child, whether the child be four or eight.
- Parents are welcomed to help during the day.

- Some parents help on educational visits.
- Some parents support school through fund-raising.
- Parents' views are sought on such things as home/school agreements and what the reports should look like.
- Regular newsletters.
- At the beginning of the term, class teachers invite parents for a cup of tea. The term's topic is then explained, and parents given ideas of how to help.
- Teachers accompany the children in the playground at the end of the day and talk to parents.

It is not only the children, but also parents, who benefit from being involved in their children's education. Many women have gone on to complete their own education, through the support and confidence they got from being involved in the school. I am very glad that my children and I had the opportunity of starting school in such a welcoming, caring environment where the philosophy was to 'admit families as well as children'.

A recent report by the Church of England Board of Education emphasises the Church's approach to education as being one founded on a notion of inclusiveness rather than separation from the community. It goes on to say, "The Church's schools will seek to engage actively with all parents and to be distinctively welcoming to them." As one headteacher said at a consultation meeting with parents, "We do not admit children, we admit families."

But what does that mean in practice? My daughters started their schooling in a small Church of England First School. Being a teacher myself, I had already been reading

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Most schools, both primary and secondary, run by the Anglican Church are located in some of the most remote rural areas, providing much needed Christian education to young children. Running a school and providing Christian education the Anglican way in these remote rural areas is very challenging. Government services and support is generally very poor compared to urban areas. Most parents of the children are subsistence farmers trying their best to send their children to school and providing school fees which increase every year. The country is currently undergoing reforms within its education system in providing basic education from Village Tok Ples schools (elementary prep. 1 and 2) to Grade 2-8 (Primary) 9-12 (Secondary).

Urban and peri-urban families provide school fees and additional educational materials for their children, since most parents are working class and educational materials are readily available. But in rural and remote areas the parents find it hard to pay for school fees because selling their produce is a slow and costly exercise. Educational materials are not readily available to them.

Families are now realising the importance of education and are trying their best to send their children to school. A lot of awareness is needed to inform the parents

about the education reforms, especially in the remote rural schools.

In the peri-urban and urban centres, the boys' and girls' education does not differ much in terms of enrolment and curriculum. It is noted that girls are performing better than boys. Also the girls are beginning to gain acceptance in male-dominated careers. This trend is now being experienced at a slow rate in remote rural areas. The education reforms now taking place encourage both girls' and boys' curricular integration. For example, boys are doing home economics and girls are doing woodwork.

Churches and Christians are encouraging such education by providing teachers, donating educational materials and sponsoring students. But more needs to be done and funding also needs to be provided for the maintenance of building infrastructures, constructing much needed buildings for educational projects, and recruiting more skilled teacher volunteers.

PAKISTAN

but uneducated, are often those who have not had a good experience of school and are therefore not so concerned for their children as they do not see the purpose of it all. The well educated are obviously able to help their children to have better education. Sometimes village parents take great pains to escort their girls to and from school, even going quite long distances where the girls would not be safe without an escort.

Perween's parents were illiterate. The pastor recognised the need to educate girls and she became the first girl from her village to go to school, first in the village and then in the hostel where she passed her Matric and was thus enabled to go on to train as a nurse. Her mother was so proud on her graduation day. Her example to the family, and through them to the village, has meant that almost all the girls in the village now not only go to school but complete their Matric and go on to college or train as nurses. Perween's own children, who are brought up in a different village, are well on in their schooling.

Unfortunately, the opposite effect is also very common. Where a girl or boy drops out of school and gets employment of a menial kind, and one who has passed all the exams is left unemployed, the attitude of "Well, what is the use of education?" means that some children are then deprived of the chance to complete their education because their parents find menial jobs for them. The

motivation of the parents and the encouragement of the family are very important.

In Pakistan, the importance of boys in the family is very strongly emphasised. They tend to be spoilt and pampered and this proves to be a hindrance in their education. Boys well disciplined in the home usually do well in school whatever the financial status or educational background may be.

Here in Pakistan, in Sialkot Diocese, we run schools for poor children, for boys and for girls, and have a hostel for each for those who have exhausted the educational facilities near their homes. Some parishes have also started small nursery classes for children to give them a good preparation for the bigger schools. Teachers are also hired on a voluntary basis to teach those who have never had the chance to go to school. They quickly become able to read St John's Gospel.

The motivation of the family is a very important factor in the effort to see that every child gets the opportunity for education. The priorities and interests of the parents, the atmosphere in the home, the hobbies and family activities play a vital part in the education of the children.

Children learn and develop best in the warmth of the family circles. Confidence in getting out to school requires the security of love in the family. Children who are secure in such love are free to give their whole attention to their schoolwork and are thus able to gain full benefit from the education they receive there.

In Pakistan, there are still, in the villages and city slums, many uneducated or illiterate parents. Illiterate parents are usually keen for their children to have education but often do not have the means. The literate,

CHINA

In one rural household, the twelve-year-old boy, a primary school monitor, was recommended for the Junior Middle School by the headmaster. None of his four younger brothers or sisters goes to school. The mother can afford fees for only one at £60 each year. The father divorced and left home, yet he can still claim the house and family cow, even though they are needed. The family is vulnerable in many ways – food supplies, the mother's health and their home: if the son were to lose this opportunity, he would step off the educational ladder for good: is this the making of another rural migrant in China?

The Maio village is still too far from the primary school for young children to walk safely and only a few of the 50 school-age children can afford to go. This village has an Oxfam project where loans support farmers in income-earning schemes, but ten out of 25 families cannot repay the loans, including the father who wanted his son to have a chance to go to Junior Middle School. Some men earned 10 yuan a day (90 pence) working in the coal mines, and families had sold their sheep and pigs, but this year hail had damaged the spring crops and there would still be food shortages for 1-2 months. Educational opportunities are

balanced against food security and the farm economy. Why can't this village have its own primary school?

These communities represent the complex choices about schooling that are faced by rural and urban families. They survive on the edge of a vulnerable rural economy, yet all wanted education for their children. Each educated child was seen as an opportunity for a more secure future. In these circumstances, choices are stark. They are

of a different nature to the decisions we might make about education, but for all, the chance to learn in schools may be the difference between a marginal place in society and a more secure role in a family and community.

Macau Anglican Primary School

The banana-shaped site, with a 50-year government lease, for the “experimental school” lies on a roundabout, between two roads, and faces four multi-storey blocks of flats. The architect’s impression shows a curved five-storey building with views to the hills and trees beyond. The vision it fulfils is that of Rev Dr Michael Poon.

After more than ten years as principal of the Sheng Kung Hui Choi Kou School in Macau, he was well aware of the shortcomings of local education: classes as large as 48; intensive sessions of learning by rote; long hours of homework; and no common curriculum or public examinations. He sought to offer local and expatriate children an alternative “by exposing them to a creative and multi-cultural learning atmosphere”. With support from the Diocese and the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the work began to provide a school which will be part of the non-selective, Government free education scheme, able to offer teaching based on the English National Curriculum; purpose-built, like the school, for the children of Macau.

The school is due to open in September 2002, with an intake of eight classes of 30 children aged three to seven. After that the school will grow gradually as extra kindergarten children are taken in each year. It is estimated that there will be approximately 800 children in a total of 27 classrooms, if the target of an annual three class intake is reached. Other facilities will include computer, art and craft, music and science rooms, a library and a theatre-style assembly hall. The teaching will be in English with Mandarin as a second language, even though the majority of the children will speak Cantonese. It is hoped that with native English-speaking Christian teachers, as well as local teachers who want to be part of this challenging project, the children will learn in a natural way, with an understanding which will enable them to gain a greater knowledge and insight into Macau, China and the wider world and their future within it. They will be learning for life.

Why will this work? With full support from both Government and Church, prayer in plenty, and with people willing to “take a chance”, we rely on God and His provision for the children of Macau.

Imagine trying to cash travellers’ cheques in a city bank in Honduras and no one on the bank staff spoke English. It happened to a teacher from the United States who taught at one of the Episcopal bilingual schools. She looked around the bank lobby and saw one of her students from last year, a small boy of ten. He came to her rescue, listened to the problem and then explained it all to the bank teller.

The teacher was so proud of him. He was a child who had been discouraged about school until he attended the special summer remedial program where this teacher taught. The boy’s grandmother says that now he is a changed boy and really enjoys learning English.

For the poorest Spanish-speaking country in the Western Hemisphere, education is a way out and up and a good education is prized. Many families sacrifice to send their children to a private school, as public education is woefully inadequate. Especially desired is a bilingual education, being fluent in English and Spanish.

Diana Frade, founder and director of Our Little Roses Ministries which includes The Holy Family School, the newest of six bilingual Episcopal schools, believes that education is the means to breaking the cycle of poverty that keeps so many in perpetual bondage. Our scholarships enable very poor children to get an education and access to cultural opportunities otherwise unavailable.

Among its many ministries serving the poor and middle class, both emerging and established, the Episcopal Church of Honduras recognises that as a class-conscious society, it is only through Christ that people are seen as equal. The Episcopal Schools strive to educate children who will grow up having opportunities to succeed in life and to understand what it means to reach out and care for one another. Christian teachers are dedicated to preparing each child for a

life that is creative, humane, compassionate and dignified as a child of God, as well as being a contributing member of society.

After Hurricane Mitch in 1998, when this Central American country was devastated, many young people educated at diocesan bilingual schools acted as interpreters and data gatherers for US medical and relief teams. These competent English-speaking Honduran youngsters contributed greatly, aiding the teams and providing comfort for the suffering and displaced living in huge temporary shelters.

Six Episcopal schools are bilingual, which not only serve the growing middle class but also offer scholarships to academically able students. Located in the cities, the schools focus on the children who as adults will be in positions to help make permanent changes in this still-developing country.

English is accepted as the international language of commerce and Honduras has a growing number of international companies which seek graduates from our diocesan schools because of their ability to work bi-lingually and bi-culturally. Many high school graduates go on to university in Honduras or the US.

The Diocese’s Spanish language schools, located mostly in rural areas, serve the poor by offering special education such as trade and agricultural skills as well as general education classes because public schools do not exist or are very poorly staffed and equipped.

CHILE

In the extensive and affluent middle class of Chilean society, the same social problems are evident as in any other part of the "civilised" world: drug and alcohol abuse, internet pornography, rebellion against the values previously upheld as sacred, and an increasing disability on the part of parents to cope with their adolescent children's refusal to accept the parental dictate.

In schools, this is reflected in a steadily growing number of children diagnosed as having some kind of special need, currently 25% in the first four years of primary education. Leaving aside the negative side of this situation, – and its ramifications are considerable, – it must be said that the silver lining is that it has driven schools and parents to the realisation of the necessity of working together to create a climate of co-operation in which the child is made to feel that he or she is important.

Within the Association of British Schools in Chile, a network of 17 schools of similar ethos and aims, there is, at all levels, much sharing of information and expertise on this matter. At St Paul's School, an increasingly co-operative climate of concern has led to the establishment of a programme of developmental education run by the school and the Parents' Association in conjunction, using a great deal of the professional expertise represented by the parent body. This takes the form of day retreats for different year groups, evening seminars and workshops for parents and also meetings at which parents and children work together at tasks focusing on mutual esteem and reciprocal appreciation.

This year it is intended to take a step further. Using the existing framework of Marriage and Youth Encounter already being administered by the Anglican Church, a project is in hand to harness the experience and goodwill of people who are currently active in those ministries, to bring the latter into the school and use them to fortify marriages and peer group relationships.

It is impossible to educate children effectively, in the fullest sense of the term, until they have acquired some sense of self-worth. It is also impossible for the school to carry out the task on its own. Parents have to realise that they are the main agents in their children's education, and the principle on which we work is that, if we show that we are willing to help them, they will be more willing to recognise the importance of our mission and, consequently, better disposed to help us to accomplish it.

PARAGUAY

Although the family is traditionally a strong ideal in Latin America, in practice many fathers are absent and mothers prefer to remain unmarried, using their children as security. Paraguay is one of South America's poorest and least developed countries and educational provision is patchy. Teachers are poorly trained and many schools lack even the basic facilities because the country's

resources are limited and strategies to implement them are often misapplied. A high percentage of mothers are the main breadwinners and supporters of the family and many leave their children in the care of untrained childminders to go to work. Only one five-year-old child in four has any kind of schooling. Many very young children can be seen either working selling sweets and drinks, washing car windscreens or begging in the streets, a problem that the Paraguayan Government is aware of. Many of these children have little access to education, either because they are supporting the family, because the money for books or fees is beyond their family's means, or because present provision for education is inadequate. The need for a greater availability of educational opportunities with Christian values is clear.

With a view to providing this, a Faculty of Education for the Early Years was started in February 2000. It is the dream of teachers at Colegio San Andrés, an all-age school for 400 pupils in the capital, Asunción, started by the South American Mission Society. San Andrés opened an annexe school to reach children of the riverside shanty town almost thirty years ago. It is also involved in helping provide educational materials for the very poor and marginalised Indian communities in the rural Chaco area. The new teacher-training department is a collaboration between Anglicans and other Christian denominations who have a vision to increase learning opportunities for the underprivileged in a society with a sharp imbalance between rich and poor, and urban, rural and indigenous communities. Remarkably, Paraguay has a number of Christian schools and this bold new venture seems to be part of God's plan to bring gospel values to a needy country. Another aim is to enlist the support of pastors of Paraguayan churches who are concerned about the future of children in their areas and will sponsor young people with the natural gifts for teaching to attend the Faculty's three- or five-year courses. Once qualified, these students could return to start church-based schools.

The Faculty is an ambitious project still in its infancy. The funds for the initial building of two classrooms attached to Colegio San Andrés were prayed in and the Lord provided wonderfully. The Faculty continues to depend daily on God's provision and is currently seeking funds to add five more classrooms to allow for future growth. It is hoped that in God's grace, Christian teachers of the future in Paraguay will have a wider impact on society and government.

JAMAICA

It has been running a school for years: both an afternoon homework club where children can find a safe space and support to do their studies; and a college where teenagers can learn the basic curriculum as well as vocational skills, including IT and cosmetology, at very little cost.

But whilst being able to read, write and add up may get you a job (though the odds are already stacked against you if you live in the ghettos), it won't make your community a safe place to live. This is why learning respect is so important and why S-Corner has taken the idea of teaching respect out of the four walls of school and has started small-scale peace-building initiatives.

One of these initiatives is small income generation projects. When people have work, state S-Corner staff, levels of violence in the community fall. Young people who are unable to find work have been able to tend a vegetable patch or look after chickens. Like the seeds that are planted with the promise of crops, there is hope that these small income generation initiatives will develop into something bigger, and that respect and peace will be among the fruits.

Another peace-building initiative is community mediation. Carol Walker is a mediator who works with the local Community Development Council, which is connected to S-Corner. When

arguments break out, she mediates between disputants, trying to diffuse the tension and help them to put down their arms and reach peaceful solutions. Peace-building is a tricky business; one outbreak of violence can set things back to square one, generating a climate of mistrust and fear. But the flame of determination to make Bennettland a violence-free zone will not be easily put out.

"We are not fighting a losing battle", says Carol Walker, "but a long, hard battle and maybe we'll have lots of set backs on the way."

It is nothing unusual for children and teenagers all around the world to learn the three Rs at school: reading, writing and arithmetic. At the Grassroots school in Kingston, Bennettland, however, they have to learn another 'R': respect.

Christian Aid partner S-Corner Clinic and Community Centre is situated right in the middle of down-town Kingston, Jamaica, infamous for high levels of poverty, violence and crime and a million miles away from the tourist board image of sun, sea and sand.

CHILDREN'S PRAYERS

Dear God

Please make all the children not be unkind to people and not pick the flowers and make people and children kind and make people and children not fight.

Dear God

Thank you for forgiving everything we do wrong.
Help us to learn to do things right from things we do wrong.
Please forgive me and others for what we have done wrong.

Dear God

I think you made the world really beautiful with food, people, animals and special teachers.

Dear God

Please make the world be safe and let us have no danger and nobody get hurt and
Thank you for giving us a life and family and
Thank you for making food.
I thank you for giving us love from our mum and dad.

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NEXT NEWSLETTER

We are now working on the **Children and War** newsletter. The next issue, for which we would like to receive contributions from as many parts of the Anglican Communion as possible, is to be on the theme of **Family Breakdown**. We are wanting information (articles 300-500 words) on causes and effects of marriage breakup, on the decline of the extended family, and on problems in relationships between parents and children. As well as telling of the difficulties, we want to hear about practical projects to help support families and prevent family breakdown in our changing world.

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