



IAFN

June 2018



Abundant Life for All Children

An IAFN contribution to the WCC 'Churches' Commitments to Children' initiative and the faith-based campaign 'It Takes a World to End Violence Against Children'

International Anglican Family Network

celebrating the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation

Abundant Life for All Children

Editorial:

By the Most Revd Sir David Moxon, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

"We are saved by and in hope (Romans 8.24), without hope we perish (Proverbs 29.18). These are different ways of saying the same thing from both testaments, the fathomless depths of the wisdom of God in the Bible. Paul in Romans goes on to say that the Holy Spirit prays within us with groaning too deep for words ... knowing that in all things God works for the good of those who love him. This is the great hope of every parent immediately after the groaning labours of childbirth and the sighs of recognition of a newborn baby.

The raising and care of children in families is surely one of the greatest opportunities to witness to this profound truth. If a child senses instinctively that they represent a great hope even from the first breath, that they are cherished as the fulfilment of hope, that they are to be raised in hope, then they are in a way saved by this hope. The first basic building block of human development is trust, and this is the first fruits of hope from a parent, and the imparting of a tangible form of hope to a young one.

This sense of hope is one of the crucial questions of our day that all of us share: Do we have a reason to hope in the world we live in, into which we introduce children? Will the environment sustain them, will it be healthy, can the planet be saved, will there be enough for all, will our children be safe, will they have a reason to live and grow up into abundance of life and fulfilment?

A growing child very quickly learns whether it is personally welcome and loved, whether it is raised in a household of hope. A very simple form of distrust or even childlike doubt and cynicism can settle in very early and very quickly if there isn't enough hope to go around. The basic existential question for a child, as it is for us all, is: is the universe a compassionate positive place, or is it a jungle of competing forces of self survival and fear? Is there enough love to share in and to share around?

The International Anglican Family Network holds a candle for a faith that knows that perfect love casts out fear, a faith position that births hope. These are the means of saving grace today. The solidarity and networking of the IAFN stands for hope, and the saving grace it brings to every child who is immersed in it.

When the immediate family is seriously out-manoeuvred by circumstances, or limited by disadvantage, a gospel-shaped hope which knows that light can move a stone of defeat and death away, is the only ultimate hope you can believe in: because of what you have seen of the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' attitude to children is to see them as potential bearers of the life of the Kingdom of God on earth, of such are these, let them come into the midst of us in this way (*cf* Matthew 19.14). This is a courageous faith position and worth every effort of our lives and our highest self giving. Without this, ultimately, we perish.

This month's newsletter is full of examples where a candle is lit for hope for children in many different parts of the world, even in places where the shadows appear to have gathered.

What else could be more important?"

International Anglican Family Network (IAFN)

IAFN networks across the Anglican Communion to celebrate the God-given potential of the family as a source of thriving relationships, identity, belonging, discipleship and reconciliation. Out of this celebration IAFN is an advocate for the family in the face of behaviours which diminish this potential, sharing stories of hope, promoting family care and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity.

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Front cover photo: *Children of Filipino migrant workers at play in Japan. Photo: Chubu Diocese, Nippon Sei Ko Kai (the Anglican Church in Japan).*

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Transforming children's lives for good

The Diocese of Connor in Northern Ireland partners with other agencies to bring hope and care to the most vulnerable children and young people in the community.

Covering County Antrim and part of County Londonderry, the Diocese of Connor is one of the busiest and most populated dioceses in the Church of Ireland. There are two cathedrals in the diocese; Christ Church Cathedral Lisburn is the Cathedral Church of Connor, and St Anne's Cathedral Belfast, is shared with the Diocese of Down and Dromore. The Diocese of Connor is also home to three universities – Queen's University, Belfast; the University of Ulster at Coleraine and Jordanstown; and Stranmillis College.

Included in the diocese is North and West Belfast which contains the Shankill road area of the city. This area is one of the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland and has suffered more than most from sectarian violence, with over 1,000 people killed in a two square mile radius. This has left a legacy of hopelessness within the local community. There is a massive educational under-achievement issue and a culture of drug/alcohol abuse together with a large suicide rate particularly among young people.

In the 21st century, all churches are facing similar challenges across most inner cities. How to engage and most importantly help those on our doorstep who are suffering from social hardships? To help the local parishes, the diocese, in partnership with the Church Army, set up a Centre of Mission in the heart of the community on the Shankill road.

This initiative came out of a desire to try something different, to re-engage with the community and to do so through the parishes, who may have wanted to reach out but lacked the resources to do so themselves. The support and partnerships

we have with different organisations within the Centre of Mission has given us the ability to reach more people than we ever could have by ourselves and has encouraged the local parishes to engage with their local communities through several different ways.

The Centre of Mission team, consisting of a development officer, two evangelists, a children's officer and a youth officer, have developed several partnership programmes aimed particularly at the most vulnerable young people in society.

Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) is an organisation and programme which works with struggling or under-privileged children in the area who are at risk from exclusion from school. This is done in a partnership between the team and the school. TLG intervenes in these children's lives to bring care, education and support in one-to-one mentoring with our staff. This mentoring project also impacts on the families of the young people and provides them with much needed support as they try to deal with all the issues around exclusion from school.

Baby basics is another partner organisation within the Centre of Mission with the aim of supporting new, single mothers, some of whom may still be children themselves. Baby basics links up with midwives in the area and arranges to deliver a Moses basket to the new mother, containing all the things that a new-born would need.



Photo: Baby Basics

Baby Basics also helps female asylum seekers who may be vulnerable, as well as women who may be victims of domestic abuse. This project is supported by parishes across the diocese who supply all the baby clothes, blankets, etc. In this last year, this project has helped over 60 mums in the local area.

Although the Centre of Mission is based in North Belfast, it serves as a template for parishes across the diocese and indeed the Church of Ireland.

Underpinning all the work of the project is solid missional values, with the local church spearheading engagement with the most vulnerable, helping them at their point of need and sharing the love of God in their lives in real and practical ways.

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Photo: Transforming Lives for Good

'It takes us all to end violence against children'

A reflection by members of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia involved in mission and ministry among families and children.

In the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, we believe that we have a responsibility to actively promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, and to keep them safe. We are committed to ensuring they are protected from all forms of abuse.

The Church is called by God to love, stand alongside and advocate for those at the margins, those less powerful, and those without a voice in our society.

With ever increasing technology, members of our households are withdrawing more from the day-to-day interactions of a safe family environment, essential to gauging the psychological, spiritual, and physical health of our children.

Children should not have to grow and develop in isolation. Parents, caregivers, and communities are the role models of God's love, mercy and compassion in the immediate and extended family.

For some parents, campaigns have literally revved up with the rumble of Harley Davidsons. The Redeemed Motorcycle Ministry rides into towns with a simple message: Operation SOS - Save our Sons, Stop our Suicides, Support our Sisters, Save our Souls. This ecumenical campaign seeks to encourage men to 'Man Up' to the responsibilities of being better fathers, husbands and leaders in the home and in communities.

Christian communities should be places where all people feel welcomed, respected and safe. 'God Centred Families' is the overarching goal for Moana Children's Ministry. The basis for



Revd Tony Brooking, member of the Redeemed Motorcycle Ministry
<http://www.theredeemed.org.nz>. Photo: Lloyd Ashton

keeping children safe is family and community. God is family (aiga, whānau), God is community (koro, iwi), God is love (alofa, aroha). Moana is the sea that encompasses the width, depth, vastness, fluid and borderless nature of the ocean that connects land masses, countries and geographical spaces in lively and forceful ways which adds mystery to its nature. The many facets of Moana are evident in the connectedness of family relationships, kinship lines and cultural ties wherein the child is nurtured, provided for and protected.

The people of Oceania speak and tell stories (talanoa, kōrero) of God as Moana using metaphors and symbols that speak to us in our contexts. It is in these settings where every person has infinite worth and unique value as a child of God, irrespective of origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, beliefs, social or economic status, ability to contribute,

The Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia has a number of organisations that have children and their whanau (a Maori word meaning extended family or community of related families who live together in the same area) as part of their outreach. Here are some examples:

The programmes of **Anglican Action** based in Hamilton, New Zealand, include the Kids First Whanau Centre, a residential programme offering women and children a place of safety, support and education, and Youth Justice, providing support, advocacy and mentoring for young people who have come into contact with the court system. <http://bit.ly/2IirQ8S>

The **Bishop's Action Foundation** works throughout Taranaki, New Zealand, researching, collaborating and supporting projects that help the community. These include parenting programmes aiming to give parents the skills they need to raise confident, healthy children and teenagers and to build stronger family relationships. <http://www.baf.org.nz>

The integrated Family, Early Education and Social Work services and programmes of the **Anglican Trust for Women and Children** help to protect, nurture and provide opportunities for up to 3,000 children, young people and their families across Auckland. <https://atwc.org.nz>

House of Sarah in Fiji in the Diocese of Polynesia provides a Christian network of services to families, churches and communities to end violence and abuse against women and children. Its work includes a strong educational focus for the whole Pacific region. <http://houseofsarah.org>

Te Whare Ruruhau o Meri (TWRoM) is a charitable trust operating under the guidance of Te Pihopatanga o Te Tai Tokerau, the northern branch of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa. Its community-based social services include youth work and domestic violence support to whānau.

their past contribution to society, or present psychological, physical or spiritual state.

Christian values are reinforced in the Sunday School and Church family, the formal School family, the local community family and the wider world community family. We are to re-engage through regular contact with the grass-roots. Our churches ought to get alongside all families and get to know children well. By creating spaces for the whole family nucleus, we create environments that provide for the vital role in identifying, supporting, and overcoming those in abusive situations.

Partnering with children, young people and their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of all families. It really does take a whole village to bring up a child and likewise it takes a whole community to end violence against children. To end violence against children in this Province means that we are to mobilise ourselves to go out to where they are.

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Discipline without violence

In the Church of the Province of the West Indies, Mothers' Union programmes are helping families to put away the 'rod' and discipline their children in positive ways. Sophia Jones, Mothers' Union Senior Communications Manager, explains:

For many people in the Caribbean the saying, 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' is taken literally. It's not uncommon to beat children for bad behaviour, disrespect and rudeness. The 'rod' can take the form of a switch, belt, strap, wooden spoon, hand. Learned behaviour over centuries is still thought, by some, to instil discipline and good behaviour in an 'unruly' child.

However, in many cases it can cause distress and low self-esteem, not to mention physical and emotional scarring. Sadly, in extreme cases, it can even cause death. Parents, however, are learning other less violent ways to discipline their children. The Mothers' Union is leading the way in providing them with training and support.

The Mothers' Union is a global Christian movement of four million members in 84 countries providing care and support to families and communities. The Dioceses in the Province of the West Indies are Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Windward Islands, North Eastern Caribbean, Aruba, Jamaica and Belize. There are more than 10,000 members in this region.

Sheran Harper, lives in Guyana and is the Mothers' Union Worldwide Parenting Trainer and a Trustee for the organisation. She believes that the acute challenges faced by families can lead to parents taking out their frustrations on

their children. "People here face poverty, lack of educational opportunities and jobs. There is not enough community support for single parent households.

"Women are unable to earn enough to sustain their families. Girls are forced to leave school early to assist in the home or the farm. There are teenage marriages, adolescent pregnancies, gender-based violence, sexual violence", she says.

Parents are often working more than one job to sustain their families. If it is a single parent family they often are unable to take care of their children adequately.

To address many of these challenges the Mothers' Union runs a number of projects and programmes: Church and Community Mobilisation Process (CCMP), counselling services, feeding programmes, care for the elderly, support groups for survivors of abuse, empowerment programmes for women and youth and positive parenting programmes, to name just a few.

Mary Anthony is 35 and lives in Tumatumari, a village in the Potaro region of Guyana. She is mum to six children aged from 20 down to two years old.



Photo: Phil Knox/Mothers' Union

"My mum is a Mothers' Union parenting facilitator. She explained to me how important the training is", she says. "My sisters and I used to beat our children very badly. I started to go to sessions every weekend. I learned how to speak to my children instead of being physical with them. By the time I had my younger children, I realised that I disciplined them very differently to the older ones. I speak to them in a better way", she continues.

Jenny Robertson echoes what Mary says. She is from Rupertee village in the Rupinuni region, Guyana, and took part in the parenting programme for one year. Jenny, 27, is mum to Dwayne (6), Lashana (3) and Jared (2), and says, "I found the programme hard at first. But I learned so much about how to care for my family. I decided to do it because I wanted to learn how to care for them. My sister is doing it too. Even though I have finished I want to continue doing it because I want to learn even more." Jenny heard about the parenting training from the community leader of her village. "When I had Dwayne I didn't know what to do. But now I do and I feel more confident. The most important thing I've learned is how to

care for them, play with them and to teach and nurture them in a right way”, she explains.

Lena Edmondson is Mothers’ Union Parenting Trainer for the West Indies and the Americas. She believes the parenting programme is strengthening family life throughout the region; “Not only that but fathers are getting more involved in the raising of their children. They are learning new and different ways of disciplining their children rather than beating them.

They are learning how to set boundaries with their children and to stick to them. They are also learning how to raise their teenagers positively. Fathers are spending more time with their sons. It truly is life-changing!”

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Protecting the planet for all our children

Nosipho’s story, from Green Anglicans in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Nosipho is a 13-year-old Sunday School member in an Anglican Church in a vast sprawling township 20km outside Cape Town. It was built on the sand and is very dry and windy. She lives in a shack with her family and the dust blows into the house.

Green Anglicans started a project called ‘Avos from Anglicans’ and she has learned how to grow a seedling from an avocado pit. She is going to keep all the pits she can and teach her friends as well. She will plant the little tree in her yard and has a dream of making the whole street green. When they started the project, their priest planted and blessed a little avocado tree at the church and the Sunday School will have to water it every week.



She likes Green Anglicans because last year she and her friends got to go on a hike called ‘Pride of Table Mountain’. They went on a bus with kids from two other Sunday Schools and it was brilliant fun. They started the morning with some leaders who taught them all about Table Mountain and what plants they would see. She didn’t know that there were so many different kinds. They also learned the difference

between an alien tree and an indigenous one, and now she knows that alien trees use up a lot of water.

The hike was quite tough but she loved it. She hopes that one day she can work as an environmental educator or a ranger on the mountain too. Now, when she goes to town on the train she sees Table Mountain and knows all about it and really does feel proud of her mountain. When she wears her Green Anglican T-shirt she feels very proud and wants to look after the plants on the mountain.



Recently some of the big kids from church went down to the beach at Monwabisi for a Big Beach Clean up. They collected loads of rubbish in a very short time. They learned that the worst plastic is that which is used only once, like straws and water bottles. Animals eat them and get sick and we might also get sick because the tiny pieces of plastic will get into the fish that we eat. One of the things they learnt was how to make an eco-brick by stuffing plastic into a 2-litre plastic drinks bottle. These bottles are then cemented together to make walls for classrooms. One of the kids follows Green Anglicans Instagram on his cell phone and showed her some cool pictures of a crèche made from eco-bricks. Their teacher says they must bring five eco-bricks each to Sunday School.

Nosipho’s Sunday School teacher is called Miss Manentsa and she loves all kinds of green things. She taught them a lot of fun stories from a Sunday School book called Ryan the Rhino. This year they have been having a drought in Cape Town, and from Ryan’s book, they learned that water is very precious. Nosipho saw a baptism a few weeks ago and the teacher reminded her that they were all baptized when they were babies or little children, so water is sacred to Anglicans. We must look after it. The children discussed how they can save water and Nosipho is doing lots of things to save water at home and at school.

Last year Miss Manentsa took the class to an exciting World Environment Day Festival. They prepared a dance, and some of the other Sunday Schools did songs and dramas. They won second prize and so this year they will practice even harder and maybe win first prize. It is fun being a Green Anglican!!

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Committed to Children

The “Churches’ Commitments to Children” is an open invitation from the World Council of Churches (WCC) to its member churches and partners to address the needs of children as an integral part of the ecumenical commitment to the pilgrimage of justice and peace.

These Commitments to Children emerged from a consultative process within the WCC constituency including partners, children and young people, and a group of theologians. They outline specific actions and strategies that any church can adopt in response to pressing challenges impacting children.

The Commitments have three broad headings: ‘Promote child protection through church communities’; ‘Promote meaningful participation by children and adolescents’, and ‘Raise church voices for intergenerational climate justice, supporting initiatives for and with children and adolescents’. Find out more at <http://bit.ly/2wHYIji> and download the poster at <http://bit.ly/2KSswQU>

Ending violence against children

The global Christian organisation World Vision has been spear-heading a faith-based campaign called ‘It takes a world to end violence against children’:

“Violence is the world's worst crime against children. It affects around 1.7 billion children every year, in every country, city and community ... The bottom line is, children deserve better. Let's work together to make sure they grow up happy, healthy, educated, loved and protected.”

Find out more at <https://www.wvi.org/ittakesaworld>

Childhood restored to victims of trafficking

This story from the Diocese of Accra in Ghana, Church of the Province of West Africa, shows how the Church can partner with other agencies in order to rescue and rehabilitate child victims of trafficking and forced labour, and to tackle root causes of exploitation.

Over the years, the trafficking of children has become a worrisome cancer across the world. Children are being recruited, sold into slavery and exploited by malevolent people. According to a survey by the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service, Ghana is a major country of origin for victims of child trafficking. As well as being trafficked across Ghana’s borders, children are trafficked within the country and become trapped in conditions of forced labour in fishing, domestic service, street hawking, begging, herding, mining, and agriculture. They may also be subjected to prostitution.

It is in this light that the Diocese of Accra decided to partner with the United States Embassy to combat this injustice.

As part of the Church’s ‘Social Responsibility in the Nation’ activities, and also in line with the ‘Social Impact’ pillar of the Diocesan Vision, the Diocese has been setting up a community shelter called Hope Village in order to facilitate the rehabilitation of rescued children.



It is estimated that about 1.8 million children, representing 21.6 per cent of Ghana’s 8.6 million children aged between 5 and 17, are involved in child labour and child trafficking. Some 14.2 per cent of these children are caught up in hazardous child labour.

Our goals in the Diocese of Accra are to create awareness of the evil practices of child trafficking; rescue children from the clutches of traffickers; rehabilitate and reintegrate the rescued children, and expose all organised networks involved in human trafficking of any sort in Ghana.

It is of foremost importance to shine more light on this wicked practice. A write-up on the USA Department of State website indicates that the government of Ghana does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however it is making significant efforts to do so. The Church is seeking to aid the government in creating more awareness through mass education.

The trafficking and exploitation of children hinder their education and, if this continues, the nation will be short of skilled labour in some matter of years.

Hope Village will ensure that the rescued children are educated, rehabilitated and mentored before being reintegrated into society. This is to open their eyes to the vast opportunities the world has to offer them.

In most cases, in the past, rescued children returned to whatever craft they had been forced into. This was because they did not have the requisite skills or help to follow their dreams and also because they were often brainwashed into believing they were of no use to civil society.

The Church has also focused on exposing all organised networks involved in human trafficking of any sort. The Diocese is of the view that the best approach to solving this menace is to attack it right at the roots. In exposing these shameless criminals, it is hoped that future potential traffickers will desist from the act totally.

must be ready to act and guide people who suffer gang harassment and are forced to take steps."



Young Anglicans in El Salvador
Photo: Juventud Anglicana de El Salvador

There are many cases of children and adolescents like Miguel who fail to fulfil their dreams and become good men and women for our country. Given the lack of a functional judicial system to control what happens in an area and the impunity associated with these crimes, IAES will continue working to support and accompany the Salvadoran population.

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Children are gifts of God

Esther Banda, a theological student at Carlile College of Theology and Business Studies in Nairobi, Kenya, reflects on the God-given value of children and how this provides a context for our own relationships and ministry among them:

The biblical mandate to make God known to our children and our children's children extends to us today. Though the methods of doing so in our contexts may differ from our forefathers and foremothers, the principles remain the same. Our understanding of what the Word of God teaches regarding children will shape the way we treat them.

Children are human beings made in the image of God (Genesis 1.27). Children, like adults, matter to God and are worthy of human dignity and respect. Jesus said of children: "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven", and a few verses later, "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18.10, 14). Likewise, children are included in the 'all' and 'everyone' in Joel 2.28-32, "...I will pour my spirit on all people... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved".

Children are gifts of God. They are a source of joy and a blessing (Psalm 127.3, Deuteronomy 28.4, 11). The way we treat them will speak volumes about how we relate to the Giver himself. They need to be nurtured and protected. The Lord Jesus Christ equates receiving children to receiving himself (Matthew 18.5).

Children are models of faith. The Bible includes stories of children's faith, like Samuel (1 Samuel 3) and the girl in the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5). In Matthew 21.12-16, we read of children, led by the Spirit of God, singing songs of praise for the work of God even amidst opposition from the religious elders.

My three-year-old grandson stood with me by the roadside waiting for his mother to pick us up. We were joined by a widowed friend of mine who pastors a local congregation. As we were talking my grandson kept reciting Luke 1.37 "For nothing is impossible with God" - his very first memory verse from Sunday School.

We were so engrossed in our discussion that we did not pay attention, but the boy kept saying the verse and louder! My friend caught it and acknowledged God was speaking to her. The boy stopped, and we focused on the verse, it was the right word from the Lord for what she was going through. She was greatly encouraged and was at peace. So, children can be vehicles of God's revelation.

Children are included in matters concerning the vulnerable, orphans, the fatherless, neighbours and strangers in need of justice and compassion. God cares for hurting children. We are encouraged to do likewise (Deuteronomy 10.17-19; James 1.27).

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Boniface's story

Boniface Phiri is a young man in the parish of Chawama in Lusaka, Zambia. Esther's husband, Revd Rogers Banda, helped Boniface to put his experience into writing:

Some years ago when I was ten years old, as a short-tempered person I had few friends because of my short temper which at times turned me into a violent person. Violence is defined as an action which causes pain, suffering and distraction or misunderstanding between peoples. This is exactly what was happening in my life.

For me, fighting my colleagues who were also in different gangs was like a daily bread, but as soon as mum knew my bad behaviour, each time she learnt of my fights, she immediately disciplined me upon returning home. This resulted in my life being changed as I stopped hanging out with violent people because they were giving nothing good in my life but rather putting it at risk.

Mum further began sharing with me words from the Bible, and I remember Romans 6.23 says that 'The wages of sin is death'. My parents started teaching me how to live with people in society and how to interact with others because it is not good to be lonely and fighting those who you think hate you. I thank God for the parents who taught me God's word in a small way that has really changed my life, and now my life is not the same as it was.

Thereafter, I started mingling with different people freely especially with those who were Christians and loved going to

church. I encourage all young people, those who are Christians who are now my brothers and sisters, to stay away from violence because it does not contribute anything in their lives. Life is a gift from God that every child has to enjoy.

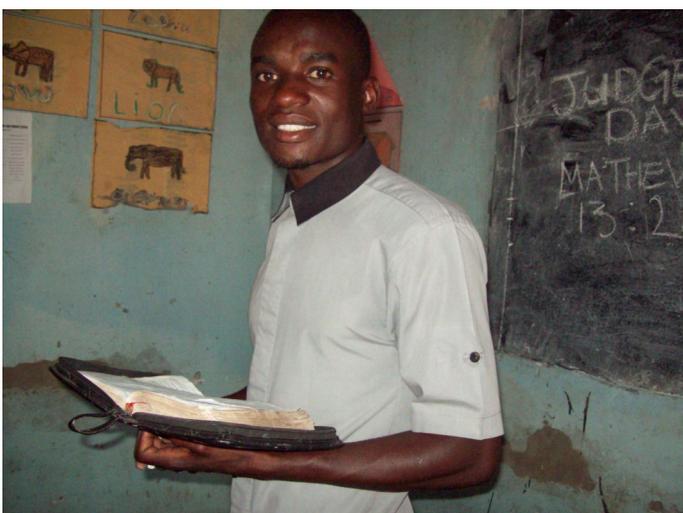


Boniface, front row on the right, with his friends

I take it that it is a priority and a responsibility of parents and leaders to teach the children in the way they are supposed to grow because charity begins at home. From a bad boy I am now a strong and energetic youth and a child of God.

Violence has added nothing to my life. But as for now life is good as I work with Sunday School, Choir members and the Poetry Youth Group. I thank God for who I am, because without God I am nothing. But working together with other youth, we can make the world better, as Anglicans, as we commit our lives to God and allow God to use us.

We can help children to end violence and to love God by teaching them about the word of God even when they are still at a younger age. God has given children capacity to understand the disadvantage of being violent if they are taught by their parents or in Sunday School.



Visit IAFN at: <http://iafn.anglicancommunion.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/AnglicanFamilies>

Send us your stories: Email iafn@anglicancommunion.org

Keeping things equal for children

Not having enough food or the right school uniform can marginalise children and detract from their flourishing. The Provost of Inverness Cathedral in the United Diocese of Moray, Ross & Caithness, Scottish Episcopal Church, describes how a project is 'levelling the playing field' for children.

'People on the margins of our society.' This is a well used, well intentioned phrase heard in the pews of many a church. But who are these people and what do we think we are praying for them, when we use these words?

At Inverness Cathedral, we found ourselves using this exact phrase in our Services. We began to ask God how we might serve marginalised people and families and meet their needs. Scripture led us to receiving the invitation: "... whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple ..." (Matthew 10.42).

We were very much aware of the needs of the community around us. The Cathedral has a prominent location on the banks of the River Ness, surrounded by houses and offices with wonderful Victorian architecture, expensive hotels and restaurants, and thousands of visitors from across the world.

Yet we knew that some local families were struggling to provide the basic requirements of sufficient food, school uniform and winter jackets. Through no fault of parents and parenting, these are issues for many families. The systems in place make it difficult for families to balance low incomes with the essential needs of food and adequate clothing. Life is complicated and therefore often chaotic.

We began our projects, named inSpire@InvernessCathedral, to make a difference in some small way. During the long summer holidays, around 45 families were served a hot lunch three days a week, with picnic lunches provided for the other two days. Friendships and social contact were made and families enjoyed a break from the worry of trying to provide additional food in the place of school meals. Families came as often as they needed and found a place of welcome. Alongside the lunch they were able to access a toiletries bank, a school uniform bank and a number of food items.

During the autumn and winter of 2017, we distributed winter jackets to families to alleviate the effects of a Scottish Highland winter and to relieve families of the financial burden. This meant that children could take part in outdoor activities at school during break times. One result of this is that children and young people are not at a disadvantage to their peers; they wear the same new school uniform and winter jackets as their friends, and look the same.

At the start of 2018, the challenge of children missing out on breakfast developed into the cathedral providing breakfast boxes, making a healthy cereal bar, drink and a piece of fruit available. We now offer these in the local schools, where school staff can identify those children who require the boxes and ensure they get some breakfast.

The projects have all been well received and are set to continue. We are acutely aware that we are only touching the

surface of reaching families in these areas of multiple deprivation. Statistics tell us the potential number of children and young people who struggle with feeling hungry and living in poverty, and we know that each of them comes with their own story which is not ours to tell.

We also know that a lunch during the summer holidays or a brand new winter jacket has eased a little of the stress and tension in households, even for a short space of time, helping to change the lives of children and young people in our area.

We have committed to helping where we can with no judgement and no questions asked, but simply offering to serve the needs of our neighbours.

CONTACT: The Very Revd Sarah E Murray, Provost of Inverness Cathedral, email revsarahmurray@gmail.com.

Reducing stigma and supporting parents of Special Children

The Diocese of Peshawar in the Church of Pakistan, in collaboration with World Relief, has launched a project called 'Community-directed Rehabilitation of Special Children'. The project is implemented through the diocesan Mental Health Centre in Peshawar.

The project aims to improve the quality of life for mentally disabled children and their families, irrespective of faith, creed and colour, in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The project has multiple aims. It builds the capacity of parents of mentally disabled children to care for their children at home and at a basic community level. It also builds the capacity of health professionals in this area.

The project creates structures to assist parents in connecting, communicating, and advocating for their children. Caregivers and medical professionals are provided with rehabilitative training and equipment.

The project will create awareness within the community of mental disability, which will go a long way to reducing the stigma that surrounds it.

Most services for Special Children around the world are child-oriented. However, the Mental Health Centre in Peshawar, through this project, cares for parents as well. Counselling sessions are specifically designed to support parents and encourage them to speak about their mental stress and how they cope with it.

Recently, Mrs Promilla Isaac and Mr Oliver Caleb, Principal of the diocesan school for mentally challenged children, were the main resource persons for a group counselling session arranged for parents at the Mental Health Centre.

Mr Caleb welcomed the parents and said that day to day management of a mentally disabled child at home is not an easy task. Parents go through lots of family stress, including social, economic and psychological problems and anxiety which can lead to stress.



Staff and volunteers look after the children while their parents are in a counselling session. Photo: Diocese of Peshawar

Parents were encouraged to speak openly and share their spiritual and psychological challenges. Most of the parents participating in the session were women. Mothers said that in the beginning it was difficult for them to accept the reality of having a mentally disabled child. However, as soon as they began to accept their child, the rest of the problems started disappearing. They also related how their social life and psychological wellbeing had been affected, though this had been improving since they started attending the counselling sessions.

Parents talked through their experience of how family relationships are affected, and how to approach feelings of guilt and the social stigma attached to mentally disabled persons.

CONTACT: The Mental Health Centre, Diocese of Peshawar, Church of Pakistan, email info@peshawardiocese.org and mentalhealthcentrepeshawar@hotmail.com.
World Relief: <https://www.worldrelief.org>

Helping immigrant children to flourish

In Chubu Diocese in Nippon Sei Ko Kai (the Anglican Church in Japan), the children of migrant workers from the Philippines have been finding a 'home from home'.

Japan has been one of the world's major destinations for Filipino migrant workers. For the most part, they can be found in low-paid jobs and they are quickly affected by down-turns in the Japanese economy.

For 20 years, the Ecumenical Learning Center for Children (ELCC), has served the educational needs of Filipino children living in Japan, despite the drastic changes in their daily lives and government policies concerning migration.

In 1998, the ELCC was established by the Nagoya Youth Center in the Anglican Diocese of Chubu Diocese to provide basic education for children of undocumented Filipino parents living in Japan, and as a place they could use and where Filipino



ELCC: Volunteer teaching Nihongo

identity could be assimilated among the children. These children were denied the right to education and were not given the opportunity to experience schooling even when they reached school age. The Japanese government recognises the Convention on the Rights of the Child and adopted a policy to accept foreign children, irrespective of their legal stay or residence status, in elementary and secondary schools and to extend to them free tuition as enjoyed by Japanese children, However, at the time, Nagoya City was among the local governments that refused to accept these children.

In 2002, the Nagoya City government decided to allow undocumented children to enter regular school, most likely as a result of the lobbying and campaigning activities of concerned groups and individuals. But despite this development, those parents who do not have proper visas are reluctant to send their children to school for fear of deportation when the authorities learn of their existence. They prefer to continue sending their children to the ELCC.

The years have passed and there have been significant changes in government policies on migration which directly affect the lives of foreign migrants, including the children. Many have been forcibly deported back to the Philippines due to a massive crackdown on illegal immigrants. Some were allowed to stay according to various categories.

In addition to this, during the years that the ELCC has continued to serve the Filipino community, different patterns and situations have emerged which affect children.

There are children who have been born and brought up in Japan, whose parents are both Filipino. They cannot speak Nihongo (the Japanese language) fluently and, most of the time, members of the family talk in their native language. They seldom watch local TV programmes but instead watch programmes from their native land through cable or the internet.

There are children who are Japanese nationals (Japanese father, Filipina mother). They have been sent to the Philippines and stayed there after the divorce of their parents.

Mothers have to leave their children with their families in the Philippines in order to focus on their jobs in Japan and secure their families' financial situation. The years spent in the Philippines mean they can no longer speak Nihongo when they return.

There are also "newcomer" children who were left in the Philippines by their mothers when they came and settled here in Japan. Once the mothers established their lives here, they brought their children to Japan so that they can live together.

All of these children have a major thing in common; they all want to stay and live in Japan, but have insufficient Nihongo. Although parents have the option of sending their children to regular school, some parents choose to send their children to the ELCC to prepare them for the next school year. The age range of "newcomer" children coming to Japan is wide, and the support the children need depends on their age.

Although the ELCC was created to support the children of 'overstayed' Filipinos, the continually changing circumstances mean that there is still a need to continue and step-up its service to the less fortunate children who have been caught up and affected by different aspects of migration.

CONTACT: Nestor L Puno, email nyc.chubu@nssk.org. ELCC, 466-0804 Nagoya-shi, Showa-ku, Miyahigashi-cho 260, Japan.

Loving God in whom is heaven,

Abba creator of us all,

your kingdom is imaged in little children,
your nurturing love is the means of grace and the hope of glory.

Come down upon the families of the earth with your grace and goodness,
pour out a fresh measure of your hope and joy,
that they may see and be seen, as children of the light.

Through Jesus Christ,
The child blesser, the hope bearer, the life giver.
Amen.

The Most Revd Sir David Moxon, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia



IAFN