



IAFN

November 2019



The Church as Family

Helping people and communities to move towards hope and abundant life:
Stories from around the Anglican Communion

International Anglican Family Network

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

The Church as Family

Editorial:

By the Bishop of St Asaph, the Church in Wales, the Rt Revd Gregory Cameron

St Asaph diocese in north east Wales is probably about 1500 years old, and named after its second bishop. We believe in being and becoming the family of God: *being* God's family because all who are baptised are made heirs of God's kingdom; *becoming* God's family because we are seeking to become the salt, light and city that Jesus calls God's people to become. Mindful of the fact that we're a very small part of God's big family, we tend to call ourselves 'Teulu Asaph', the Welsh for 'the family of St Asaph', given that this saint gave shape to our common life during his ministry in the sixth century.

Calling yourselves a family has deep implications. It is more than holding cosy feelings for one another. It means being loyal to keeping space open for one another, and admitting that there is a bond between us which runs deeper than emotions, success or failure – or even happiness with one another. Nor should the Church's members forget that we are family, not because we choose to be, but because we are called and (re)born as the family of God by his grace, and his choice.

The Church as a family share one Father, and have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing should therefore be allowed to divide us. But a family also takes risks for one another. This newsletter tells powerful stories of risk-taking in order to draw others into the circle of God's love – to extend the family – and I, for one, am proud of what Anglicans are doing across the globe.

I hope that, as you read these stories, you will be inspired to do three things:

- To thank God for our Anglican family and its work across the globe.
- To pray for the risk-takers in these stories, as they widen the boundaries of God's love for all his children.
- To think about how you can join in risk-taking in your own context in order to widen the expression of God's love to those most in need of it among your own people and communities.

Jesus challenged us in two of his sayings:

- "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3.33-35) and
- "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25.40)

What a manifesto for mission!

From the family of St Asaph: love, greetings, and good wishes for the future in the name of Jesus Christ, with whom we are fellow heirs in the family of God.

+Gregory Llanelwy

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: The Mindanao Lumad Ministry of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI). See page 10.

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Open doors and open eyes

Diana Hall, Rector of St Anne's Scottish Episcopal & Methodist Church in Dunbar, Scotland, describes how the church family has become 'family' to the wider community.

Our High Street church in the growing Scottish harbour town of Dunbar is 130 years old. But seven years ago it was in dire straits: inward-looking, with a dwindling Sunday gathering, and struggling to support a quarter-time priest. However, in a remarkable season, God has led this small community on a transformational journey of re-imagining what it means to be the Good News in our town.

We raised significant funds to adapt a neglected church building to create a versatile worship and community hub. Now our church is becoming known as a place open daily to all as a haven for peace and contemplation, and as a welcoming venue for community groups, activities and events for people of all ages and walks of life. Sunday gatherings have doubled in numbers, and we are supporting a full-time priest.

Somehow, the more open we have been to the Spirit, the more she has led us into spiritual growth through service of our neighbours. With our doors and our eyes open, the opportunities and challenges people face in our town are becoming increasingly visible to us, and people seem to sense in us the invitation into friendship and relationship.



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper for local children

Examples of how the church family has been privileged to become 'family' to the wider community include the following:

- Providing a base, part-funding and volunteers to help ensure continuation of the Harbour Lights youth groups when the town's Methodist Chapel and hall closed recently. Focussed on the needs of youngsters from the area of multiple deprivation around the harbour and adjacent to the church, this has already spawned a Homework Club and, unexpectedly, seen a number of parents begin to enjoy informal hospitality, friendship and support as the children enjoy recreation.
- Supporting Mercy, a homeless African mum with three young children who appeared at our service one

Sunday. The family was originally granted asylum status elsewhere in Europe before being forced to flee to Scotland to escape domestic violence. A couple in the congregation provided shelter for them for three months, while they were helped to access the state benefits system and to find temporary, and then permanent accommodation. Specialist healthcare support was accessed for the child most adversely affected by the abuse he had experienced. The whole congregation learnt much from loving the family. They gained a new appreciation of the challenges faced by immigrants and single parents, as they helped the family find essentials to enable them to set up a new home. We grew in humility as we journeyed with a determined and resilient mother as she fought for, and found, good, permanent employment. Spiritually, their vibrancy and freedom in worship, their intimacy in prayer and their absolute confidence in the God who provides for all of our needs helped release us into deeper worship also.

As we have prayed for and wondered how we might serve our small town and surrounding local community, we became aware of the likelihood of hidden financial hardship, and a lack of support to enable people to tackle it. Those needs align with gifts God has given us—people gifted in hospitality, listening, and financial stewardship. So, we are responding by working with the Salvation Army to establish a debt advice service. We plan to offer a weekly 'drop-in' café in the church to foster supportive community, offering gentle pastoral support and discrete provision of professional debt advice.

As people begin to identify the church as a place of welcome, we are re-finding our place as a hub for friendship and community in the town. People's God-given stories are being shared and valued. We hope this openness will enable people to share and receive support to overcome their burdens.



Regular drop-in session for isolated and housebound elderly

It is a beautiful thing to see how God is leading our small church to reach out to be family to others. As we learn to serve our neighbours, we are rediscovering our common humanity. People outside the traditional church community are encountering God's love through our actions, and as we encounter people 'different' to us, we are meeting Christ too - noticing beauty, dignity and value in new ways. By God's grace we receive at least as much as we give.

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Te Whare Ruruhou o Meri Trust: responding to an intergenerational crisis

This Maori Anglican social service agency was named by the late Reverend Puti Hopaea Murray, a legendary pioneer here in the Maori Anglican Church in the Province of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. It translates into English as 'Mary's Sanctuary'. She named this church ministry unit in honour of Mary the mother of Jesus, Messiah - Saviour of humanity.

Te Whare Ruruhou o Meri is the social services arm of Te Pihopatanga o Te Tai Tokerau, the northern-most Maori diocese in New Zealand. As an organisation it has positioned itself to undertake the mission of the church in this province, to respond to human need by loving service, to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation.

Many Maori families suffer each day from the scourge of physical and sexual violence. This abuse is generations-long and is intensifying. Alcohol and substance abuse ravage these families resulting in pain, suffering, grief and hopelessness. Maori, as the indigenous peoples of New Zealand, are at a crisis point with over 60 per cent of children in state care of Maori descent; over 60 per cent of the prison population of Maori descent; and Maori having the highest suicide rates in the country despite being only 16 per cent of the population.



Indigenous Social Workers of Te Whare Ruruhou o Meri Trust alongside the Prime Minister of New Zealand the Right Hon Jacinda Adern and the Minister for Police, the Right Hon Stuart Nash at the opening of the Family Harm Team buildings, Auckland, June 2019. Rosemary Vaikeli (left) and Tilly Pomare (second from right) work alongside the New Zealand Police to support Maori families that come to the attention of police because of family violence episodes.

We exist to combat these forces of evil that damage and destroy the hearts, spirits and minds of our family. We exist also to eliminate violence in our homes so that our children will not see what our eyes have seen and that they will not feel the fear and trembling that we have felt from those who are supposed to be there to love and protect us.

For the hundreds of families that come to our organisation each year seeking help, love, compassion and a sanctuary, we immerse them into the values and beliefs of the Maori culture

as tools to bring about healing and restoration. The wisdoms and traditional knowledge base of our Maori culture has the transformative power to assist families build violence-free lives. We know this to be true, and we witness this; for this is where we find joy and thanksgiving.

The traditional proverb 'ko te kai a te rangatira, he korero' – 'the food of chiefs is discussion' highlights the importance of discussion required for the transference of knowledge to the people. The programmes undertaken by families in our services relate to discussions around cultural icons and an immersion into the Maori worldview and Maori identity. The programmes take the family on a spiritual journey of rediscovery of their cultural heritage, and in this learning, they find the strength and courage to journey to wellbeing and creating better lives for themselves and their children.

For many people, participating in a therapeutic group can be more powerful than having individual support. Many of our families enter our groups with the notion that they are unique in their struggles, that they alone have had negative experiences, thoughts and impulses. While it is true that every one of our families is unique and may be dealing with different circumstances, it is important for them to know that no one is alone in their struggles. Our therapeutic groups provide a safe space for people to talk, share stories and gain a better understanding of their own situations, while supporting others to do the same. In a world where individualism is the norm, bringing people together as part of a village environment is key to having those robust and honest discussions because you really cannot have a discussion by yourself.

The men's programme requires the participant to carve a tokotoko, a traditional walking stick that is used in ceremonial speeches. The tokotoko is a prized possession in traditional Maori society. The participant is taken through the process of going in to the bush to select a stick using prayers of thanksgiving to Creator God for the gifts of the forest for our life and purpose. Each etching in the stick is representative of that person's story and identity and aspects of the traditional knowledge of their forebears. It acts as a symbol and a reminder of their identity and obligation to protect, sustain and love their families and the environment as opposed to terrorising, abusing and harming them.

An evaluation given by a partner of a past participant in the tokotoko programme shared how she had seen a 180 degree change in her partner's behaviour and character. She noticed that when things got heated, rather than arguing to the point of physical violence, her partner would take his tokotoko and leave the house to calm down. She was also quite shocked when he asked her if she wanted to go somewhere, because previously she was told what to do, never asked. She shared that their family has changed for the better and she was excited for her, her partner and their children's future.

We thank God our guide and shepherd who leads us and our Maori people towards peace and truth. In a secular world, we hold fast to the values of the Maori world that places God high above all else for it is through God and in God that we have our being and are sustained.

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They are us; they should have been safe here

On Friday 15 March 2019, 51 people were brutally slaughtered by one radicalised anti-Muslim extremist who opened fire on Muslims at prayer in first one, then another, suburban mosque. On that day, Christchurch, New Zealand, and its people were changed for ever.

The Canterbury region of New Zealand's south island is still ploughing through repairs to homes and infrastructure, and dealing with post-event trauma, as a result of the earthquakes of 2010–11. But on 15 March, the region's largest city Christchurch was back once again in a place of fear – not from a natural disaster but because of a reckless, senseless terror attack that brought our little island at the bottom of the world bursting onto the global stage of terrorism.

Immediately after this attack, New Zealand's Prime Minister, the Hon Jacinda Adern, said of the Muslim community, many of whom were refugees, 'They are us. They should have been safe here.' Adern urged New Zealanders to speak the names of those who were lost and not the man who killed them. 'We in New Zealand will give him nothing, not even his name', Adern said. Wearing a hajib in solidarity with Muslim women too scared to walk down their streets, Adern showed great strength and leadership at a time when New Zealand, and specifically Christchurch, needed it.

But all of us were reeling. How could this happen here? New Zealand is a peace-loving nation known for doing the right thing. How could this be? What did it mean? How would we be changed?

The heads of Christian Churches in Christchurch called with one voice for solidarity with our Muslim sisters and brothers and for love and peace to replace anger and hate. Peter Carrell, Anglican Bishop of Christchurch, said, 'No religious organisation or group deserves to be the target of someone's hate – regardless of beliefs. We stand for an Aotearoa New Zealand which will never condone such violence.'

Many parishes took action, ran prayer vigils and collected goods and money for the affected Muslim community. All Souls Church and parishioners from the Merivale-St Albans Parish responded immediately and held a Service of Lamentations. The service began with people gathered around 51 pairs of white shoes – a poignant symbol of the 51 New Zealanders who removed their shoes for prayer that day and didn't survive to put them back on.

Several weeks later, still struggling even to articulate what had happened and why, All Souls Church bravely held a special combined interactive service where they discussed how Christians can respond to the attacks, how we can be different and help change the world around us.

An adjunct university professor at Canterbury and mental health advocate met with the parish vicar and together they created something special. The professor calmly and respectfully guided the congregation through a series of reflections, questions, and small group discussions.



Having not had a service quite like this before, the vicar was understandably nervous. 'Thankfully I had a supportive team around me that helped to create a safe framework where we could get dialogue going.'

The professor began by acknowledging that the recent events were hard, even impossible, to understand: 'Many people are left bewildered and lost after events like this and it often helps to be with others, to share reactions and thoughts. So this Service is about how the church family, as a caring community, could respond by supporting one another, seeking to increase understanding and considering what this might mean for Christian discipleship', he said.

The interactive aspects of the service were designed to lead to greater understanding, particularly of how people view difference and diversity in local communities. There was acknowledgement that differences are a fact of life and that it is not easy to look beyond the difference of culture, faith, gender, clothes language, etc. Difference can lead to distance, which makes it harder to understand.

'The extent to which people hugged after the attacks was an indicator of wanting to be close—despite differences, the Professor said. 'Our Anglican family genuinely wanted to help our neighbourhood Muslim family.'

The crux of the Service came when the church family were asked 'What will be different for me and for this church family as a result of March 15th? What will we commit ourselves to do or change?' A variety of answers were shared including, the need for more education, the recognition that we could reach out more to the marginalised, to be interested in and listen more to those who are different, and many more.

One common aspect was the willingness to genuinely look within ourselves and pin-point racism or intolerance, explore where it comes from, and confront it to eliminate it. The idea of asking our closest family members and friends to call out any poor language or behaviour they see in us, help us deal with it, and change ourselves and our family, and by extension our community, for the better.

The professor admitted that he had these behaviours too. "I can honestly put my hand up and say that when faced with a driver doing odd and unsafe manoeuvres, I used to make acidic remarks against a certain race of people. I'm calling myself out on that. And although these ingrained and often unconscious behaviours are very hard to change, Christians have the help of the Holy Spirit and we can ask for help to identify these things, and to make lasting changes in our behaviour", he encouraged.

The parishioners enjoyed the opportunity to talk that the service provided and a number asked for some future follow-up so they don't slip back into inaction or passivity, but instead use the event to spur themselves into greater action, to bravely move forward, to improve themselves, and improve their witness within their communities.

The Vicar was pleased that as a church family they began the journey to confront racism, but continues to ask the hard questions. "We have a long way to go on this. How as Church do we overcome institutionalized racism? And how, on a personal level, do we look at those parts of ourselves which would rather turn the other way, to face the pain and consequence of racism in this country?"

"We could choose to be a family traumatised by the tragedy or we could choose to ask God how we as Christians may be transformed by it. We choose transformed. And I am eternally grateful to my church family to committing to this ongoing journey."

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The poor helping the poor

The parish of St Paul the Apostle in Santa Teresa, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, meets the families of its region.

Our parish is located in the historic district of Santa Teresa, named after Saint Teresa of Avila, when the Carmelite monastery was built in the neighbourhood. It is a place visited a lot by tourists because of a feature which is unique in Brazil: it still maintains the tram as a means of transport for local residents and visitors.

The parish was set up in the early 20th century as an initiative of wealthy families in the region to provide assistance to the poor, distributing food to the hungry and providing temporary shelter, especially during the Spanish flu season. In 1915 the 'Assistance of St Teresa' was founded and the Anglican church was charged with spiritual and pastoral leadership.

There has always been an Anglican vocation in the region to serve underprivileged families and collaborate in neighbourhood struggles to maintain their historical and

cultural values. We are a small congregation with very little revenue. But we never feel so poor that we cannot help and give, specially sharing our physical space, our time, or fostering small projects and initiatives.

The parish supports the survival of families living in the slums on local hills (there are more than 23 communities growing on the slopes of the neighbourhood), especially in Morro da Coroa and Morro dos Prazeres. In 2006, we created the Community Gardens Project transforming vacant lots and some slabs of slum houses into artisanal and organic gardens. The City Hall of Rio recently ended the project, passing tractors over the gardens to build squares with exercise equipment for seniors. The government did not listen to the population, because they had made a millionaire contract with a private company with the objective of deploying equipment around the city, regardless of the need of the needy population to have affordable food. We are still thinking of resuming the project in smaller places that do not depend on the interference of the City Hall.

As we write this article the parish is preparing to celebrate 'Marco 27 Festival'. On 27 August 2011 there was an accident with the cable car, killing 11 people and injuring 50 more. The memory of these victims is remembered annually by all the families in the neighbourhood, not only by the Anglicans. We hold a Sunday morning Memorial Mass in the Anglican parish, retelling the story and remembering the victims, with the presence of family members, the residents' association, and local artists. Then there is a procession from the Anglican church to the Roman Catholic church. We organise statements by religious and local leaders about the struggles to keep the tram going and not to corrupt its administration. We also fight for the help and compensation of the victims' families.



CELEBRAÇÃO DO MARCO 27

25 DE AGOSTO 11HS

RUA PASCHOAL CARLOS MAGNO Nº 95
SANTA TERESA - RJ

**PARÓQUIA SÃO PAULO
APÓSTOLO**

**Em memória das vítimas. Na luta
continua pelo bonde de qualidade
para a população**

This 25 August, there will be an ecumenical act on the main square reminding us of the need to remain united as a population to achieve our goals.

There is also the collaboration of the 'Encanta Santa' choir, with Anglican and non-Anglican members, which rehearses at

the church and performs around the neighbourhood to bring quality music to museums, schools and outdoor events. The choir emerged six years ago to address the many cases of depression that have arisen among local families, as we believe music heals the soul.

The initiatives we carry out for local families are a two-way street, because these families also care about us and recognise the value of the church in their lives. Last June we held the diocesan council in the parish for four days, with four daily meals made on site. Local families supported the event by bringing food - fresh, organic, breads, cakes, pastries, coffee, juices, desserts and more. This was a way of contributing back to the church that helps the neighbourhood so much. Families also hosted visitors from other cities, demonstrating that despite some precarious situations, there is solidarity among the poor.



Today we can report that there are no more rich families attending the parish church. But we consider ourselves poor helping other poor. Poor people being helped by the poorest. It is possible, as long as Christ is at the centre of our speaking and praying, of our being and acting. We have heard many testimonials from people who say they have known God by knowing Christians like us, and who say their faith in the church has been restored because we are not just working for Anglicans. We work for them all.

We would like to share a sentence from a young 'gothic' woman who was passing by and saw an invitation to an alternative movie screening inside our building: "At last a church that is good for something".

What a joy to be good for something! We are good for someone we do not even know. Finally, we are good for Jesus.

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Hospitality and welcome to all

Stories from three parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Perth, Western Australia, show how understanding local need is essential to understanding how the church can serve as a loving family among "the least of these who are members of my family" (Matthew 25.40).

Anglican Parish of Mosman Park

For about three years the Anglican Parish of Mosman Park has been in partnership with Cana Communities Incorporated, a charity with roots in the Roman Catholic Church, to support

each other in connecting with and supporting people who are most in need, whether suffering from loneliness, mental illness, addictions, homelessness, rebuilding lives after a period of imprisonment, or other factors which alienate them within society.

The link started with hosting and joining in lunches in our Community Garden. These lunches are free to those who come along and provide opportunities for those in the wider community to connect around the table with those who are in need.



St Luke's Community Garden in Mosman Park

Caná sees this as creating a community with all the love, chaos and frustration of family, in which people can be listened to and respected. Through this simple act of hospitality, relationships are built and connections and community are formed. This in turn provides a healthy basis for providing material care, where people and their stories are known and valued and can be cared for as part of the community.

In Mosman Park such links have led to some paid work being provided to people who may otherwise experience difficulty in finding people who will give them a chance. People whose lives have made it difficult to trust others have turned to the Church for pastoral care and other support. Clergy have been asked to regularly lead various services of prayer, and a house in the precinct has been made available to Caná (well below market value rates) for women in particular need. There are many stories to tell, but the parish has been blessed by its connection with Caná and the links which have been made. The parish's mission and outreach have made an appreciable mark on the lives of many.

Anglican Parish of St Michael's, Mount Pleasant

"Let's Feed the 5,000!"

Responding to local need in Perth, St Michael's Parish in Mount Pleasant has committed to reach out in loving service to the hungry, homeless and hopeful this winter.

Beginning at Pentecost we banded together in a bold joint effort with Rotary Australia, AnglicareWA Street Connect, Foodbank WA, our local primary school and our parish outreach, children's and veteran's groups. We hope to feed a nominal 5,000 people in body, mind and spirit, reaching

families in need, older women seeking shelter, street kids, villagers in Cambodia, and more.

How are we going about this? Lots of coordinated energy and excitement! And, through:

- donating lots of fabulous sleeping bags made by Stitches of Hope (for Perth youth through AnglicareWA Street Connect, but also aiding education and empowerment programmes in Cambodia)
- sharing a parish winter dinner to enjoy fellowship and raise funds for feeding the homeless
- running *Souper July* when delicious homemade soups-for-two are sold every week in July for local outreach, feeding the ill and frail, with the proceeds going towards paying-forward meals for Perth's families in need
- teaching knitting at the local school during lunch, so children can create care rugs for the Anglican children's home.

Several other plans are hatching to connect with schools and local businesses to incorporate awareness and energy into "Let's Feed the 5,000" this winter.

St Brendan's by the Sea, Anglican Parish of Warnbro

During 2015 the Parish of Warnbro realised that there was a growing need for help with people who were suffering homelessness of some kind in the parish area. The Annual Meeting of Parishioners of 2015 moved a motion to set up a respite for the homeless in the area, providing a two-course hot meal at lunchtime every Friday. This was initiated at the beginning of July 2015 and has been running ever since. It started with 12 people coming along and over the first year grew to about 40 people.

Now in 2019 the outreach provides in excess of 60 meals every Friday, 52 weeks of the year. The outreach is based on Matthew 25.40, "whenever you do it to the least of my family, you do it to me".



There is no judgement; whoever walks in the door is welcomed whatever their circumstances, from rough sleeping to couch surfing, to struggling to make ends meet, to loneliness. The vast majority of the people who come along are suffering some form of mental health issues and struggle with the everyday activities of life.

The homeless respite was first run by parishioners but it has now grown to include volunteers from the wider community,

still very much under the control of the parish. Partnerships have developed with other agencies. For example, a charity called 'Orange Sky' has a vehicle that is set up with washing machines that goes around the various agencies doing the washing for the homeless and is at the St Brendan's Respite every week. A local podiatrist comes along once a month to help the homeless with problems with their feet. A local hairdresser comes along once a month to cut their hair.

The location of the respite is a local Guide Hall as there are showers available for the homeless to use. We offer food to take away as well as the two course meal, and secondhand clothes are available. The local council helps with some of the funding for the food.

The respite is not just about giving out food, but is about a sit-down normalisation of the meal, with the needy and the volunteers sitting down together to support and encourage, and to listen to their struggles and joys.

Through the relationships built, some of the volunteers and some of the homeless have connected with the worshipping part of the church. One of the women who started out homeless has managed to rebuild her life and moved into state housing. She is now a regular volunteer who has been coming to church regularly and was recently baptized. Through the relationships built, the homeless are coming to the church when they have needs such as funerals and weddings, as well as a listening non-judgmental ear.

The growth and success of the outreach brings with it logistical problems and the parish has been training up the leaders and coordinators to better equip them for the ministry they are doing.

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Unique women & girls in Honiara

Reaching out to women and girls who have resorted to prostitution in order to survive

This story concerns a ministry that the Mothers' Union of the Anglican Church of Melanesia initiated in 2015, reaching out to a particular group of vulnerable women and girls in Honiara, described by the office as 'unique girls'. These are women and girls who, because of their circumstances, have had to make a living off the streets of Honiara as prostitutes.

The challenges facing girls in the country - high numbers of school drop-outs each year; a lack of job creation; pressures on families of different sorts, and the breakdown in the Wantok system*, mean that the number of girls and women forced to live this way may have increased.

The Mothers' Union prioritised its ministry to the unique girls and women in Honiara for the following two years with the assistance of an Action and Outreach (A & O) Coordinator.

* a social system where people who are related to each other by a common language, ethnicity, district, or by provincial boundaries, jointly participate in socio-political, economic, traditional and cultural activities.



This year, the Mothers' Union in the Anglican Church of Melanesia celebrated its 100 year anniversary. Photo: ACoM

The number of women and girls living in this situation is not known. However, when the Mothers' Union embarked on its programme, most of the females they encountered were teenagers. The girls and women live in small groups in houses or makeshift shelters in different, isolated parts of Honiara. During the night they go out to night spots, ships and hotels or are picked up by men in vehicles. And during the day they rest.

The women and girls who live this way tend to be those who, because of their circumstances, have been forced to live this way. They may have dropped out of school, fallen out with their parents or carers, or left their homes in Honiara because they no longer feel safe and loved.

In 2017, the Mothers' Union Provincial A & O Coordinator sought to make friends with the girls and women by making visits to their places. She focused on two locations in Honiara. She would take food to the girls and, following sharing the food, she was able to discuss with them their situation. After gaining their trust, activities were organised for the girls and women. These included special prayer services, life skills training, and the provision of assistance to help them with income-generating projects. About 20 women and girls participated in the programme then. The life skills training included dyeing of cloths and cooking.

In its ministry to the women and girls, the Mothers' Union had to be sensitive to their needs and feelings and go out of their way to accommodate them. It was important to understand them and not to be judgemental - or give up on them despite their behaviour. The women and girls are often very vulnerable and have been abused in some form. They suffer from low self-esteem, guilt and shame, and so they need special attention.

The programme saw some positive results with some girls and women coming up to the A & O Coordinator later to tell her how their lives had been since participating in the programme. For example, one girl rejoined her family and another girl resumed her education. The programme unfortunately could not be continued because of lack of funding and support. However, according to the A & O Coordinator, the vulnerable girls exist and have real needs. They must be reached and helped from where they are if the Church is going to be 'as Christ' to them.

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Learn to live, and live to learn together

At Ajnala in the rural community of the Diocese of Amritsar, Church of North India, Mr Om Prakash is Project Officer for the diocesan Social Empowerment and Education for Disadvantaged Children.

Here he describes how the project acts as a catalyst, bringing people in the villages together to analyse their daily lives and work on concrete strategies to build them up through using the Diocese's study centres.

The rural community is very lively but residents lack resources and are unaware of their rights to build up their lives. The Diocese has 23 study centres serving 1,299 children in 20 villages. The backgrounds of these villages are varied and the residents are largely illiterate, having poor health, and lack of availability of services and resources.

Here are two stories from the study centre in a village called Chack Bala.

Jvoti hails from a poor family. Her father is a daily wageworker and her mother is a housewife. Jvoti has two elder brothers who are also daily wage workers. They have also been helped by the diocesan Education Project since their childhood.

Jvoti is a multitalented girl and has been studying in the study centre for the past four years. The day she joined the Education Project, she was very shy and did not participate in any activity at all. The teachers in the study centres helped her to build her self-confidence.

Jvoti has now overcome all her fears. She is good at her studies and participates in co-curricular activities. She has become a mobiliser, letting other families know about the importance of education in the village.

Vicky comes from a very poor family. His father is a daily wageworker and her mother works in other people's houses to support her family. Vicky has a brother and a sister who are also studying. They have also been helped by the Education Project since their childhood. Vicky is a good singer too. Vicky joined the study centre in 2010 and since then he has been helped in different ways through this project.

There was a time when Vicky's parents had taken him out of school and started to make him work to support the family. At this point it was very difficult to bring him back to the Study Centre. The project staff and I talked with his parents and convinced them that Vicky should finish his education.

After completing his 12th grade, his parents were unable to pay for his higher education, and so Vicky was again obliged by his parents to work in some shops in order to earn for the family. Vicky was so sad because this was not what he wanted to do with his life. He approached the Diocese to explore the possibility of being supported to study further.

Vicky was subsequently admitted to Baring Union Christian College and he has now finished his studies and graduated. At



present Vicky is planning to undertake theological studies and become a pastor to serve his own community.

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Stepping in after a disaster

In March 2019 the new Missionary Diocese of Nampula in Northern Mozambique was inaugurated just as the devastation of Cyclone Idai hit the centre of the country, and also Zimbabwe and Malawi. No-one could have imagined that a few weeks later in April an unprecedented second cyclone would hit northern Mozambique—an area that had never before been affected in this way.

Bishop Manuel Ernesto shares how the church, building on its presence in the most rural communities, has been reaching out.

Our mission team found Anifa for the first time toasting dried maize for family lunch a week after the cyclone hit the village. She was the one who convinced her family to be interviewed and listed for the diocesan relief programme but they were planning to move out to other side of the Lurio river in search of food in exchange for labour which would lead Anifa to drop out from school.



Anifa's family were preparing to move away in search of food

This is how people in northern Mozambique normally cope with hard times of hunger. They will work for a landlord and in exchange they receive a food ration.

When the first food aid came, Anifa and her family received their share and their plans to move away changed and Anifa went back to school.

When the bishop and the diocesan senior staff members visited Chimoio, Anifa received school material and once we asked about her plans to cross the big Lurio, she said in a typical, local, shy voice 'n'nari' - 'no', I have changed my mind, I need to finish at the school'.



New school material came, not only for Anifa but also for all her 750 schoolmates in Chimoio

With Anifa's story we have learned that it is not just about food aid but with these quite small gestures we are beginning to change people's lives. Hunger and poverty are the major triggers of most of the social ills in rural communities.

Anifa was embarking on the direction of school drop-out, forced marriage, early pregnancy and gender dependency, and would have added her name among numerous and poor rural households. But now she is inspired and hopefully reversing her fate.

Let us together continue touching lives, one at a time, and change the face of northern Mozambique.

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Solidarity with Indigenous people

Gospel values and justice call church communities to stand as sisters and brothers alongside people who are forcefully disadvantaged and persecuted. In Mindanao, Southern Philippines, members of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) are standing in solidarity with the Lumad Indigenous people as they face structural violence through state, economic, military and paramilitary activities.

The IFI is in a relationship of full communion with the Anglican Communion and has a long history of standing with the poor and marginalised.

The year 2015 in the Philippines was characterised by ever worsening human rights violations perpetrated by state, economic, military and paramilitary activities. While many suffer, the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines remain the

most vulnerable and particularly those known as Lumads in Mindanao.

Over the past five years there have been 377 Indigenous victims of extra-judicial killing across the Philippines, 244 of whom were from Mindanao. In Mindanao there were more than 50 cases of forced evacuation all over Mindanao involving 70,000 people. Eighty Lumad schools were attacked and 30 schools were shut down, leaving 3,000 Lumad children deprived of education. Fourteen massacres took place in the Philippines and five of these were in Mindanao. Two of these massacres rocked the whole country – the Pangantucan massacre in August 2015 and the Alcadev massacre in September 2015.

The IFI's Mindanao Lumad Ministry, approved by the Mindanao Bishops' Conference, has been set up to be:

- a concrete manifestation of IFI solidarity with Lumads and Indigenous peoples without the intention to proselytise
- a concrete expression of the church's faithfulness to the gospel to preach the good news of salvation in these worst of times
- a ministry of accompaniment of the Lumads in their struggle for life
- an affirmation of the church's firm belief in the sanctity of life and dignity of all persons, which means that the protection and promotion of the human dignity of the Lumad people in this present context are a core imperative for the ministry of the church.

The Mindanao Lumad Ministry is giving priority to a number of aims and activities:

Advocacy for the Lumad right to self-determination and ancestral domain: This involves mobilising church members and making use of all platforms for advocacy so that the call of the Lumad people for their right to self-determination and ancestral domain is amplified in the widest sphere possible and generates support. This advocacy includes the engagement of key government departments such as the National Commission of Indigenous Filipinos; international players such as the United Nations; other ecumenical and church partners nationally and internationally; and also energising the IFI bishops, clergy and church members around the issues of self-determination and ancestral domain.

Education: All avenues are used to educate the faithful in order to deepen their understanding of the history and struggle of the Lumad people, and motivate them to be more responsive to their plight. Educational materials are being published for this purpose. The IFI recognises the rich spirituality of Lumads, their connection to the land and environment, and their ancient wisdom. IFI congregations can be enriched, challenged and inspired through dialogue, interaction and accompaniment of Lumad communities, with partnership strengthened through shared learning and exchange.

Influencing policy: The church is engaging with key actors, state and non-state, at the local and national levels, in the interest of influencing state policy towards more relevant,

responsive programmes that are sensitive to the Lumad rights and culture. Bishops are asked to make particular visits, along with Lumad partners, to government, UN and international non-governmental agencies with a view to having an impact on policy on key issues. In support of this, the Mindanao Lumad Ministry conducts regular analysis to identify priority issues and the most strategic interventions.

Solidarity and long-term accompaniment: The Mindanao Lumad Ministry facilitates opportunities for church communities to have consistent and meaningful engagements with Lumad communities, and to foster deeper commitment of the faithful to walk with the Lumad people on their journey towards self-determination and ancestral domain. This accompaniment may extend to the protection of Lumad communities by IFI churches, and support for Lumad mobilisation, campaigns and activities.

Identifying, connecting and resourcing legal and paralegal support: This involves strengthening the capacity of the Lumad communities to defend their individual and collective rights, and facilitating assistance and aid to Lumad people whose human rights have been violated.

The Lumad Accompaniment Programme

The Lumad Accompaniment Programme is a vital part of the 'solidarity and long-term accompaniment' objective described above. Solidarity means that the struggle of the Lumad becomes truly the church's struggle. Their aspirations are our aspirations. But we maintain our identity. That is why accompaniers wear distinctive clothing. Accompaniment as 'solidarity with identity' means that our presence is felt by the community under threat, by the perpetrators who threaten them, and by the government that is supposed to protect them.



IFI Accompaniers: Batch One

We hope that through being visible in our solidarity, we are raising the level of protection for the community. There is a high level of isolation of the Lumad communities from the broader society. This is one of many reasons why atrocities are more easily committed against them. The culprits are confident that the violations they commit will be kept secret and that they will not be held accountable. This impunity results in a high level of human rights violations against the Lumad. We hope that our presence will reduce the level of violence against Lumad people and help Lumad communities

feel safer and more confident to assert their rights. We want them to be empowered, not dependent. When they are empowered our presence may not be needed anymore.

We want the perpetrators to be aware of us and to realise that we are connected to the wider society outside of the Lumad community – which means that the Lumad community is also connected to the broader society through us. We want the perpetrators to see that Lumad communities are not completely isolated, and that they might think twice before they commit atrocities.

We want the authorities to recognise us as monitors and to feel that we will also monitor how they respond to the needs of the Lumads, both in long-term and emergency situations.

Most of the violence perpetrated against the Lumad people does not make it to the mainstream media. We therefore make use of social media and other platforms to make ‘as it happens’ reports to the wider society. On normal days, accompaniers record a log and post on social media after lunch and after dinner. During emergency situations they post as soon as possible. They complete incident reports and send them to the Mindanao Lumad Ministry office, the Commission on Human Rights, the human rights group Karapatan and other relevant organisations. Contacts with local, regional and national media are also established for this purpose.

Accompaniers must maintain that in all situations their presence is intended to bring about de-escalation of violence. Their actions and responses during actual crisis situations must primarily be for the purpose of lessening the level of violence at hand.

Being present ‘in the field’ makes accompaniers a credible source of data and information on the Lumad. Appropriate trainings are facilitated in this area so that high credibility is maintained.

The first batch of accompaniers was highly experimental for us and for the community. Our five-day placement area for batch one was the Tribal Indigenous Oppressed Group Association (TINDOGA) community in Barangay Botong, Quezon, Bukidnon. They are a Manobo-Pulangihon tribe awarded with an ancestral domain claim in the area. At present TINDOGA has 153 member families comprising almost 1,000 individuals.

After their placement period, accompaniers themselves become a network of advocates. They become accompaniers-at-large. They still accompany the Lumad wherever they are. They will become resource persons in different fora, symposia, seminars and in all avenues for information dissemination, education and advocacy. They keep in contact with the Mindanao Lumad Ministry office and provide timely Lumad updates. They are connected with the accompaniers in the field and receive fresh real time reports so that their advocacy engagements will remain fresh and highly effective.

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Our next edition

For our first newsletter in 2020, IAFN will be joining with the Anglican Alliance and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network to gather stories about families coping with the climate crisis and how churches and church initiatives are supporting families in adapting to new challenges, ‘greening’ their lifestyles, and finding a way through ‘climate grief’ towards hope for the future of our planet and all creation.

If you have a story to share, please email iafn@anglicancommunion or write to the IAFN News editor, c/o The Anglican Communion Office, 16 Tavistock Crescent, London W11 1AP, UK.

Holy and loving God,

We praise you for your love in Christ, that breaks open our hearts to new meanings of sisterhood, brotherhood and family.

How astonishing it is to see you in Christ, weak and vulnerable, hungry and cold, pierced through by the pain of the world.

Help us always to be ready to give of ourselves, to take the risk of walking with others who struggle, who feel alone, but who are your precious children.

Help us to walk the extra mile, sharing joy and sorrow, and being as Christ to those who need to know that they belong, and that they matter to you, always. Amen.



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