



IAFN

November 2022



Families in Mission:

Walking, listening and witnessing together

International Anglican Family Network

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



IAFN chair Bishop Nigel Stock with IAFN management committee member Jesse Anand in the Resource Centre during Lambeth 2022

IAFN at the Lambeth Conference!

IAFN's chair, Bishop Nigel Stock, served as chaplain to the Lambeth Conference. He reflects as follows:

After postponement because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lambeth Conference gathering took place this year from 26 July to 7 August at the University of Kent in England. I use the word 'gathering' because the Archbishop of Canterbury has wanted to emphasise that the Lambeth Conference project has three distinct phases.

The first phase happened in the run-up to the conference where groups of bishops met 'virtually' on Zoom with various preparatory discussions. These groups were deliberately varied with bishops from different provinces of the Anglican Communion beginning to get to know each other.

The Conference, or 'physical' gathering, was phase two. About 650 bishops attended for a very intense ten-day conference. Over 400 spouses also attended. At times spouses followed their own programme but at others they very much joined in with some of the presentations and topics. The actual timescale of the conference was reduced from previous gatherings, which meant that a lot was packed in. It was designed so that bishops and spouses could worship together, pray together, study together, learn together and discuss together all under the theme of 'God's

Church for God's World'. Part of the learning was provided in the Resource Centre where many organisations were represented. Amongst those present were the Networks of the Communion, and of course IAFN was very much there with a special Lambeth Conference edition of our newsletter in four languages.

There is much that I could say about how the conference unfolded and about the work of the chaplaincy with which I was involved, but there isn't space here. People though do ask, "What is the outcome of the conference?". To that I would reply that first of all it was clear that despite the packed programme and busyness, the establishment of relationships and meeting in mutual Christian support and love were hugely appreciated. For many bishops ministering in very isolated and difficult circumstances, to experience the wider Communion was hugely encouraging.

Secondly, at the heart of the discussions were a series of subjects called 'Calls'. These were subjects that, once agreed on, would become 'calls' to the provinces and dioceses of the Communion to take the particular matters into serious consideration and action. The themes of the Calls are: Mission and Evangelism, Safe Church, Anglican Identity, Reconciliation, Human Dignity, The Environment and Sustainable Development, Christian Unity, Inter Faith Relations, Discipleship, and Science and Faith. (Those who

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.

Contact IAFN to subscribe to our newsletters or to share your stories:

iafn@anglicancommunion.org

c/o The Anglican Communion Office, St Andrew's House, 16 Tavistock Crescent, London W11 1AP, UK

<http://iafn.anglicancommunion.org>

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

Twitter: @IAFN2

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have been readers of IAFN's newsletters over the years will see so many themes in the Calls that have also been addressed by IAFN!) In their discussions the bishops refined the content of the Calls and came to an agreed text for each.

The physical conference came to an end with an inspiring service in Canterbury Cathedral but the work of Lambeth 2022 has not finished. The Anglican Communion Office will be working to encourage the provinces to take up the work of discussing and acting on the Calls. This is Phase Three of Lambeth 2022. To that end it is very encouraging to see that there has been an appointment of a Bishop for Episcopal Ministry, the Rt Revd Dr Jo Wells, whose work will be to carry forward the work of the Calls and to maintain the relationships between the bishops.

One of the points observed by those who staffed the IAFN stall in the Resources venue at the Conference, was that many bishops had no idea about the work of the Networks, and many were intrigued to know about IAFN. I hope a greater awareness of the mutual support to be gained from a worldwide Communion will be one of the major benefits of Lambeth 2022. In the meantime, please pray for the taking forward of the "Calls" and I am sure that IAFN will be relating to many of the themes of those Calls.

Finally, very many thanks to the members of the IAFN Management Committee who staffed the stall. They did a great job, and have helped to better make known the aims of IAFN.

Families affected by conflict—a priority issue for many bishops and spouses

The IAFN management committee members who staffed the IAFN stall in the Lambeth Conference Resource Centre reflect on their experience and conversations:

We were delighted to represent IAFN on site during the Lambeth Conference. It was a privilege to see the Communion come together and a joy to have all the Networks of the Anglican Communion showcasing and sharing the diversity of our activities.



The IAFN stall, with our newsletters in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, attracted hundreds of bishops and their spouses and we were able to have many conversations about priority issues for families in dioceses across the Anglican Communion.



For many dioceses, youth; migration and immigration; economic, physical, mental and spiritual welfare; and issues arising in cross-cultural families, are priority themes. But clearly the most pervasive challenges concern families caught up in conflict. We were moved by the sacrificial work of bishops and spouses in areas affected by conflict, sometimes ministering to congregations split over several countries, and in the most difficult of circumstances. They spoke passionately about the pressures that conflict imposes on all spheres of family life.

Bishop Seme Nigo Abiuda from the South Sudanese Diocese of Panyana, pictured left, is a refugee bishop ministering to diocesan families displaced by conflict across three countries. He asked for prayers for his diocese, especially for the sustainable provision of food.

Our conversations in the Resource Centre during the Lambeth Conference will help us to shape the themes of our future newsletters and regional consultations.

Please contact us to let us know your priorities wherever you are. Email iafn@anglicancommunion.org. Free newsletter subscription at <http://bit.ly/3tmHUMJ>.

Families in Mission: Walking, listening and witnessing together

The theme of this newsletter draws from the central focus of the Lambeth Conference 2022—'God's Church for God's World: Walking, listening and witnessing together'. IAFN promotes the family, in all its shapes and sizes, as a place where we can share the kind of mutual love to which we are called by our Christian faith—honouring one another, respecting each other's gifts, supporting each other through suffering and encouraging each other in living a good life.

We also promote families as practitioners of mission as they seek to live out their baptismal vocation in their communities and beyond. A family may share in evangelism or run a project to help grow new disciples. A family may undertake some form of shared service in their community, campaign together against injustice, or enter deeply into practical creation care. In all such activities they are contributing to the mission of the church, which is the mission of Christ.

The stories in the following pages show how families are places of mission within and beyond themselves, and how the church can support and strengthen them in this ministry.

Joy in enough: creation care as mission

The Tomlinsons - Emma, Andrew, their son aged 4 and baby daughter - are an ordinary young family living out an extraordinary story. They live in the village of West Barns just outside Dunbar on the south east coast of Scotland. Dunbar is the birthplace of 19th century conservationist John Muir. It is Scotland's first 'Zero Waste' town (working to reduce landfill and maximise re-use and recycling of waste) and it is also Scotland's second Transition Town, part of a network seeking to increase community self-sufficiency and reduce carbon emissions.



Emma and Andrew approached their decision about where to settle and raise a family with a fresh perspective. They already knew that their desire to love God and love their neighbours would be central to their decisions. They also shared a passion for creation care, recognising the inequality and injustice to which climate change gives rise. How could they choose a life that would respond to these concerns?

Instead of being motivated by the pervasive pressure of consumerism, they decided to ask different questions: what would be good for them as a family? What did they have to offer to a wider community? In a world where those who have most also have the greatest responsibility to address climate change, how could they best serve the global community? In short, how could they develop a spiritual discipline of having enough and living joyfully?

In 2019 they found a new home - an ex-council house built in the 1920s - in which to begin answering these questions in

practical ways. The location meant they could enjoy their love of the sea, rather than travelling all the time to chase leisure pursuits. A traditional community with a strong sense of rootedness, it would facilitate building friendships with neighbours across generations. It was a place where it would be possible to work consciously to tread the earth as lightly as possible in their day to day lives, reducing their carbon footprint.

Their first big change was to swap their car for a bicycle with a trailer, and to learn that dogs, children, Christmas trees and all sorts of other loads can be transported by pedal power!

Next they set about refurbishing their home to increase its energy-efficiency. Air-source heating, solar panels and good quality insulation have all helped reduce its carbon footprint. Emma and Andrew both come from backgrounds where hospitality and shared common life are important. They altered and extended the house to make it as accessible as possible and created an extra bedroom which has allowed them to take in a housemate (which has the benefit of building community and lowering everyone's carbon footprint). In the future they hope to offer respite foster care.

Outside, their small garden already has a range of fruit trees and greenhouse crops including tomatoes and cucumbers. They are also getting involved with a local Community Garden where there is a programme of horticultural education as well as land where extra crops can be grown.

In their street, they have been welcomed into a community where people share skills and resources such as the loan of a ladder or someone putting up fencing. Their offering into this mixing-pot is a friendly face for elderly neighbours, home-baking and a door that is open to visitors.

In the wider village, they started a toddler group in the village hall, which serves their toddler well! It became valued as one of the only community groups to continue meeting during the pandemic. They have both chosen to work part- rather than full-time, so that they have more time to spend with others in the community and can share the care of their children.

Giving up being car owners was a big sacrifice in terms of convenience, even with a good public transport system. Relying more on solar power has also been a learning curve.

These two major steps have meant becoming more aware of, and living more in harmony with, the seasons. Summertime means that longer bike trips are feasible, while winter is spent closer to home. Appliances that use a lot of electricity are run when it is sunny to take advantage of solar power. It is a joy to know that an appliance is working from energy that is free!

Of course, there are also challenges. Scotland's weather can be hard work on two wheels. No car means that the family must limit the number of activities to which they can commit. This can be awkward when others have different paces of life. Interestingly, what neighbours seem to find most unusual about them is not their lack of a car but their dedication to the garden. While others are laying artificial grass and concrete driveways, Emma and Andrew are creating a pond and cultivating vegetables, and this marks them out as different.

As their son becomes more aware of his surroundings, they are increasingly conscious of the influences of advertising and consumerism on him, and they find there are still some Christians who regard environmental concerns as peripheral. But recently a group of Christians from across local churches joined Andrew and Emma in attending a local course to help people learn more about reducing their carbon footprint. Church friends have commented that their witness is a challenge to them: to use the car less and to wonder whether they could make similar changes in their own lives.

The Tomlinsons' story is one of choosing to love God and neighbour by caring for people and for creation, finding joy in what God has already provided. It is bearing fruit: new and deepening relationships in their community; a life more attuned to the seasons; an appreciation of what they have, and a way of life that is kinder to the whole global community. They recognise that their privilege is what makes their choices both possible and most necessary.

For Andrew, the point of all of this is simple: 'What we have isn't really ours. We are looking after it and trying to do something with it that would make God smile'.

Faith passed from generation to generation

The following three stories illustrate how family members who live out their faith in their daily lives, can inspire subsequent generations to explore and embrace Christian faith and discipleship.

A story from Korea

Though 87 years old, Maria is still very actively and positively serving in the church; sharing prayers, bible study and other activities. Most memorably, for more than ten years, she took care of, and helped single elderly householders who lived near the church, and at her own expense. She enjoyed this ministry and was happy to help. She continues to pray and tries to help vulnerable people around the church.

Maria's faith has continued to her children and grandchildren. Her daughter Anna Han served as a vestry member and

worked as a director of mission for culture and served in the diocesan office too. Maria's grandchildren have also served in their church, for example, as altar servers. Her husband has supported his family in their work in the church.

Maria never pressured her children to have faith and to serve and work at the church. She had a belief that living and practising the values and heritage of faith would naturally bring younger family members to the Christian faith.



Maria copying texts from the Bible

Last year on the UN International Day of Families, Maria's family was awarded the Family Peace Prize by the Korean Christian Family Life Association. Each year, the Association selects four families to receive the award for living and practising faith values through the generations. Upon receiving the award, Maria said she would impart more love and faith, not only to her children but also to her neighbours.

A story from England

Fr Andrew Appiah, Chelmsford Diocese writes:

I come from a family with many clergy models beyond the curtains of Anglicanism. My maternal family is Anglican and my paternal, Methodist. The contest was always on: who had the best hymns and the most comfortable pews, Anglican or Methodist? We, my siblings and I, would often go with Anglican, not least because mum had a lovely singing voice but also to ensure that we got a hot dinner!

Grandpa was the Dean of the Cathedral in Sekondi, Ghana. Mum grew up in the vicarage and so she understood the tenets of the Christian faith and practice. I am guessing by now you are thinking that with such a Christian family background, our faith was sure. But is that always the case?

Some might be aware of the uprising in Ghana commonly known as the June 4th revolution. There was a mass exodus. Many families, including my own family, were forced out of our homeland with only one suitcase and a heart in distress hoping for a brighter day.

Sadly, such images of conflict and family disorientation fill our media to this day and our prayers are with them. For us, however, hope was reassuring. My Dad had secured a Job in Nigeria, which would provide him with a house, a car, and a job offer for my Mum if she wanted it. The challenge was getting his wife and three children to Nigeria safely.

At the age of four, I vaguely recall the journey but we eventually arrived in Nigeria. My Dad, full of hope and joy, immediately went to the office to announce his arrival but there he was told, 'There is no job for you, sorry'.

So there we were, strangers in a far country, homeless once again with no money, no shelter, no food or water, nothing. We were forced to sleep rough. Every morning my Dad would go out to look for work only to return in frustration. All hope seemed to be lost but Mum always called us to pray psalms 23, 46 and 91.

One sunny Monday morning my siblings and I were playing on the street as we always did and a car pulled over and then a voice said, 'Why are you not in school?'

Frightened, my brother answered that we did not go to school. A woman stepped out of the car and asked, 'Where are your parents?', so we took her to see my Mum. Mum told her our story and immediately the woman offered to help. She gave us a room to spend the night, got us some food and clothing. She later invited us to her church. It turned out that she was the head of the local Mothers' Union branch.

They welcomed us warmly and provided everything that we needed. Not only did they help my Dad find work, but they also helped my Mum find work in the University of Jos catering department, which gave us the opportunity to attend school at the university primary school.

My parents, deeply overwhelmed by the generosity, kindness and prayers from the Mothers' Union, decided to offer hospitality to as many Ghanaians arriving in Nigeria as possible. Dad started a home group mainly for refugees, helping them with the immigration process and settlement. He

organised picnics, workshops and parties, and offered prayers to support this new growing community. We often had to give up our rooms to the stranger - sometimes reluctantly, but my parents always taught us to be generous and kind, quoting 1 Peter 4.9, 'Show hospitality to one another without grumbling'.

Prayer was at the heart of our family life. Our family was the primary place of biblical teaching and nurture, and there we learnt to love beyond ourselves regardless of our current situation.

Today, I am a priest in the Church of England and I wonder how much biblical teaching and how much the practical witness of my parents, that was life-giving to many, shaped my faith and life. As someone wiser than me once said, 'Jesus may be in your heart but Grandpa lives in your bones'.

A story from South India

A 'barefoot doctor' in a remote village in South India has become a missionary to her family and her village:

I am Vijaya Palsamy. I live in Mavilodai village near Nagalapuram in Thoothukudi District. I am 63 years old and my husband Palsamy is 70. We used to be daily labourers; now we are doing light work. We have four daughters who are married and well settled.

Our village is one of the target villages of the Women Workers' Training Centre (WWTC) in Nagalapuram an initiative of Thoothukudi-Nazareth Diocese of the Church of South India. The WWTC has been working in our village since 1992, training in health care, evangelism, livestock, eco cultivation and organic farming, and running a Women and Children programme.

There used to be no medical facilities in the villages. I had some knowledge of delivering babies which I learned from my mother and was one of those selected by the WWTC to serve as a health worker. It provided many health trainings to care for the villagers, especially to deliver babies in a hygienic way.

Before joining the WWTC, I conducted deliveries using an ordinary harvesting knife for cutting umbilical cords but I learned to do differently. We also took care of pregnant ladies preparing to deliver their babies and, in difficult cases, we take them to the hospital by bus or by bull-cart if there are no buses. One lady who had labour pains was in difficulty so I accompanied her to the hospital. She gave birth to her child inside the bus. The bus was stopped and became an operation theatre.

We have also been given training in herbal and home remedies, and have used them in the villages.

WWTC staff gave Christian education in all the meetings and trainings. They visited our homes and also held prayer meetings in our houses. My children were small and I was keen to bring them up in a Christian way. I was a member of a Self-Help Group that took responsibility for village development work. I was accepted in my village by all caste families' houses.



I became a Christian 20 years ago but my husband didn't like it. I was not able to help him in his work as I was fully occupied with the work of the Self-Help Group and my village health work. I was praying for him and he became a Christian 11 years ago.

My first daughter married into a Hindu family. Later she also accepted Jesus along with her children. Her husband comes to the church but has not yet been baptized. My second daughter married late and I thank God that we now have a very good son-in-law and they have two daughters. She was not baptized but her two daughters were baptized. My third daughter married into a Hindu family but I was praying for her and the whole family became Christians. Soon her daughter is going to marry a pastor. She was blessed by God and is running a business and providing work for more than 30 workers.

My fourth daughter married into a Christian family and that was possible because my husband had become a Christian. God blessed them and she is very strong in her faith and undertakes evangelism at weekends.



I also do evangelism in my village, where 20 members have become Christians. Whenever I attended family functions, many people asked me to pray for them. Some have criticised me but later, after hearing prayer for other people, they have asked me to pray for them also.

I strongly say that my family and my daughters' families have been blessed because of Jesus. We have given first place to him. My two sisters' families have also become Christians and there are others who are secret Christians. I praise God for the opportunity he has given us and for the blessings.

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Family—Caring for the core

An Archbishops' Commission in the Church of England is exploring what support families and households need to flourish in today's society.

The Families and Households Commission began its work in May 2021 and aims to articulate and address the pressures and challenges facing families and households, whilst also highlighting the good and the positive in terms of what works well and how that can be built on, drawing on Christian tradition.

The Commission is focussing particularly on four areas: the theology underpinning our understanding of family life and households within society; the social history of families and households across the centuries and into the 21st century, and the changing nature and expectations of family life; how to promote and support the well-being of children and young people; and couple relationships, marriage, civil partnerships, cohabitation; and conflict resolution.

The Commission aims to ensure that it is responsive to the needs and voices of families and households, placing children and young people at the centre. The Commission is scheduled to finalise its work and report in Winter 2022.

Some resources have already been developed by the Commission. They include briefing papers such as 'Understanding the meaning of family' and 'Learning from Christian and other faith traditions about how couples, parents and children can be supported to flourish'.

There are also theology papers that have been commissioned specifically by the Commission, with theologians invited to reflect on different aspects of family and household life. Topics include 'Jesus and family in the Gospels' and 'The New Testament household codes'.

This growing collection of resources can be found at <http://bit.ly/3X4RIOI>. (The views expressed on the Commission's pages are those of Commission members and contributors and are not necessarily those of the Archbishops or of the Church of England.)

Video: The Archbishop of York, the Most Revd Stephen Cottrell, reflects on the work of the Commission. See <http://bit.ly/3ttOWPQ>



Caring for families – as a family

Bishop Richard Wallace, his wife Archdeacon Mere Wallace, their daughter Susan Wallace and her children have all played a pivotal role in the mission to bring good food and good health to the community around the Te Waipounamu Centre, which is the Māori Anglican bishopric headquarters for the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. The centre has grown into a hub of community care operating at the heart of their inner city suburb.

When the Rt Revd Richard Wallace was installed as Māori Bishop of *Te Waipounamu* (the South Island of New Zealand) in 2017, he and his *whānau* (extended family/family group) relocated to the city of Christchurch.

Surveying her new surroundings, Archdeacon Mere Wallace stood at the Te Waipounamu Centre gate and asked, ‘God, what do you want me to do with this place?’.

Even before Richard’s ordination as Bishop of Te Waipounamu, Mere had begun to see the glaring needs of people in the Waipounamu Centre’s neighbourhood.

‘I knew we had people sitting outside all along here, and down at the shopping centre, and we had people begging.’

And Mere says that while *whānau* were struggling back then, many are finding things really tough now. ‘I meet people here and it worries me that mothers, families who own houses, who had good jobs – they have never recovered from the earthquakes, never got their insurance money. They were ten years behind already. And then COVID came.’

When she had asked that question at the Te Waipounamu Centre gate, Mere heard an answer. ‘I started thinking about the fruit trees in the grounds of St George’s Cathedral in Jerusalem. And that’s when I got told: “Turn [the Centre] into a Garden of Eden”.’

Mere quickly responded, getting planter boxes built on the back section of the fields at the Centre and establishing vegetable gardens.



‘We were visiting people in prison and when we told them about our plans, they gave us plants from their nursery. Commercial plant nurseries helped us too. We said, “We’re a church planting gardens to feed the *whānau* that we visit”, and they helped us with plants they could spare.’

Mere and Rita Biddle went to work on weeding and watering, as well as planting a stand of *harakeke* (native flax) along the boundary. The *harakeke* is now sought after far and wide for its long, strong leaves for weaving. Finally came the flowers and the fruit trees, which produced abundantly almost straight away.

When the first harvest came round, the team wanted a way to share what they had grown. Then Mere spotted the solid frame and glass doors of a fridge that was headed for the refuse skip. Before long it was installed at the front fence, thanks to a crew of ‘periodic detention’ workers on site that week.

Now the Te Waipounamu bishopric centre had a new *Pouaka Kai* (street pantry) ready to feed any hungry passers-by. If Mere doubted the need for their *Pouaka Kai*, the answer was clear and immediate. Soon the garden couldn’t keep up with demand.



Susan Wallace and Rita Biddle at the Pouaka Kai (food pantry)

So, Mere’s daughter Susan who manages the *Hui Amorangi o Te Waipounamu* (Māori Anglican Synod of the South Island) reached out to Foodbank Aotearoa who came on board to deliver stock for the *Pouaka Kai*’s shelves: bread rolls, loaves, vegetables and fruit, and an assortment of donated foods.

Now, each Friday and Monday, Rita Biddle and Maria Potaka join Archdeacon Mere’s teenaged granddaughters and other volunteers to stock the *Pouaka Kai*.

‘We fill it on Fridays and Mondays because the weekend is a time of pressure and stress for *whānau*,’ said Susan Wallace. ‘They might be at the end of the *pūtea* (funds) that they have after paying their bills, and the weekend is when they don’t have the support of school-based food programmes for their children.’

Whilst it is a Māori-led ministry, the bishopric puts no limits on who can use the *Pouaka Kai* at the gate. ‘You would have seen some of our people this morning at the gate. All kinds. We have seen all ethnicities, so it is not just Māori people we support. We don’t distinguish. We don’t know who God is going to send to us on a daily basis or a weekly basis.’

Once the *Pouaka Kai* was established, the Te Waipounamu Centre quickly became known as a community ‘go-to’ place for food. So when a local Māori social service group needed a

distribution centre for their food share operation, they went straight to the Māori Anglican Church.

Today 30 to 50 food parcels go out from the Te Waipounamu centre each Friday forming a vital part of the wrap-around services offered to whānau through a network of Christchurch-based Māori social service organisations.

Mere believes that the church's position, being a step removed from 'official channels', makes it easier for people to come for help.

'We are not inquisitive. We don't spy on them. We don't ask them a lot of questions because these are people who usually have to answer a lot of questions to get what they need.

'In most other places, you have to go to social services and you have to get permission – and somebody else is making a decision for you. We don't do that. Because of that, I think they feel safe here.'

The team at the Te Waipounamu Centre also host a Pokapū Kai project that shares food through healthcare navigators who distribute food to whānau on a daily basis. And this year, the South Island-wide Māori health organisation has invited the Māori Anglican Church to partner with it again. This time they have become a distribution hub to share pandemic healthcare packs through Māori Anglican communities across the South Island.

Huia Tahere is the person who makes sure the health packs get posted out to every Māori Anglican ministry team across Te Waipounamu. 'We aim to get these health essentials out to our people before COVID hits their whānau. We have distributed thermometers, oximeters, cough medicine and nasal sprays as well as lozenges and other health products', said Huia.

... let them know they are loved

Archdeacon Mere is amazed at the way God has multiplied the Māori Anglican Synod's efforts to care for families using their site, all from stopping to ask that first question, 'God, what do you want me to do with this place?'

'The normal thing for us to do is to take the gospel to the four corners of *Te Waipounamu* (the South Island), and to do that we have to listen to God and have a loving and grateful heart. But it is also about *Te Oranga Ake* (life itself), our ministry approach, which focuses on thriving ministry in challenging times. We have to get people to thrive, not just in the church but outside the church.'

Archdeacon Mere and the Wallace family are clear that anything Christians can give still pales in the light of what God has given to us in Jesus. But when they are at work in the church and community, she says they are working with families, as a family, to share God's love.

'It's just letting people know in little snippets what Jesus did. We just let them know they are loved. And because God loves them, our job is to help them to thrive.'

Snapshot from Lambeth 2022



Bishop Stephen Kabora from the Diocese of Nyahururu in Kenya shared with us how the church is working to support families who have lost loved ones to COVID. The pandemic has had a profound effect, especially on children who have lost parents.

Family to family: Hosting refugees

For Polly and Peter Vacher, from All Saints Church, North Moreton in England, seeing pictures of Russian forces invading Ukraine was a call to action. The couple, married for over 50 years, had visited Ukraine and had friends with connections to the country. Their immediate question was, 'What can we do to help?'

'I have been a Christian for many, many years. And I think I've always had this philosophy that you've just got to do your little bit for society in whatever way you can', Polly says. She contacted a friend, who invited her to a meeting with Ukrainian lawyers living in London.

The lawyers had a list of hundreds of refugees who wanted to come to England. The family felt strongly that 'if you have the space, you have to share it'. They themselves volunteered to host a family and, that night, Polly sent an email around her village asking if others would join them. North Moreton is a close-knit village, and from 160 households, 17 families volunteered.

Polly and Peter organised a meeting in the village hall and explained the hosting scheme to people, feeling that it is vital



Destruction in Ukraine. [Photo by Алесь Усцінай](#)

that everyone should understand the commitments before they start out. Polly then helped the lawyers link Ukrainian and British families, with each side drawing on their knowledge of the people involved. She and Peter set up a support network for hosts and also for others in the village who were unable to host but wanted to offer support in other ways. WhatsApp groups linked all the hosts together, enabling them to share questions and answers with each other. This connection was vital as they were helping their guests negotiate the different aspects of life in the UK, from interactions with the health service to schooling.

Opening homes was also a whole village endeavour. One family had a space to offer, but no furnishings. Another email went out, and people in and around the village contributed everything that was needed. 'To me, that was so amazing – you could say that was God at work – to get people coming together to furnish the house.'

Another family offered space for goods donated by villagers so that the new arrivals could come and choose clothing and toys, as they had often had to flee with very little. Retired teachers offered English classes; an artist offered art classes.

Preparing for the arrivals wasn't just about hospitality. When visas were delayed, it also involved advocacy. Polly appeared in the media, drawing attention to the visa issues and spoke with their Member of Parliament. Ultimately, all of the families were able to enter; in all about fifty Ukrainians came to the village.

The family who came to Polly and Peter had been through traumatic experiences. The house next to them was bombed and a grandparent was so traumatised by the tanks rolling into the area that he died of a heart attack. Unable to move, the family had to bury him in the garden. Eventually they drove over fields to escape to safety.

Awareness of what people had been through gave Polly and Peter some initial concern. 'We were anxious to do the right thing ... that was the most important thing ... You have these people who are traumatised, and we are not trained counsellors or anything like that.' The couple offered their support, but emphasise that it has been a communal effort,

with help from the local authority and local agencies. And the Ukrainians in the village have also supported each other. 'They built up their own fellowship', says Peter, adding 'They were tremendous at helping themselves'.

One thing that helped in their particular host/guest relationship was Polly's recollection of her mother's experience when she was evacuated during World War II, which had involved sharing clear expectations on both sides, so that everyone knew where they were. Polly and Peter also were careful to strike a balance between being supportive and trying to do too much for their guests. 'We didn't want to do too much for them; they need their own space. But you work it out. You know, we are all humans together. If both sides want to make it work, it will work.'

Polly and Peter both feel that arriving into families helped the Ukrainians in their village to adjust to the new surroundings. Polly adds, 'If it was us who were being attacked by another country and we wanted to go to Ukraine, we would want to go to a family where we felt we could be safe and helped, because we don't speak the language, we don't know where to go shopping – just the basics of life.'

The couple are clear that hosting was a gift to them too. 'We were the winners, really. Our experience has been that the refugees have given us far more than we could ever give them. They have shown us strength and courage, and that in itself is inspirational.' The guests also taught their hosts about their culture, including holding a party to share Ukrainian food, dance and singing. Polly is talking with them about joining in the church's traditional Christmas 'Lessons and Carols' service, which will incorporate some Ukrainian carols.

Reflecting on their experience in the light of a recent reading in church from the Gospel of John, Polly says, 'The lesson was just to love one another. To me that is such a basic approach to life. And it isn't always easy to love one another, because people might irritate you. But that is the lesson from Jesus, that we must love one another. And I think that is brilliant. It is what makes the world tick.'

God's Justice: Theology and gender-based violence

The stories in this newsletter illustrate how families are seeking to live out their baptismal vocations as disciples of Christ, working together in mission.

However, there are many forces and pressures, personal actions and inactions, which can challenge or destroy the benefits and gifts of family life, because status, identity and even safety are lost.

The Revd Dr Paula Nesbitt, consultant to the steering group of the International Anglican Women's Network, writes about a new Anglican resource for promoting respectful gender-based relationships and ending violence and abuse:

What if we could live together in mutually loving relationships free of violence and abuse, as Jesus Christ has taught? The

Anglican Communion's new resource—*God's Justice: Just Relationships between women and men, girls and boys*—can help churches and members everywhere do just that.

Written by scholars, clergy, and laity from different parts of the Anglican Communion, the purpose of *God's Justice* is to show how the Bible and Christian teachings can support just, loving, and mutually respectful relationships. It also offers ways in which churches can, and should, respond to gender-based injustice, abuse and violence.

The development of *God's Justice* is rooted in Resolution 16.02 passed by the Anglican Consultative Council in 2016 (see bit.ly/3ATsIED). The resolution encourages all Anglican provinces to help girls and boys, women and men, to participate in relationships 'that reflect Christian values of love, dignity, and justice'. It led to a set of study materials, completed in 2019, for use in theological colleges, seminaries, and training programmes for future clergy and other church leaders.

Scholars from every continent participated in writing and editing the materials, guided by the Revd Canon Terrie Robinson, then Director for Women in Church & Society at the Anglican Communion Office, and the Revd Canon Dr Stephen Spencer, Director for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion.

In 2021, Mandy Marshall, Director of Gender Justice for the Anglican Communion, brought together a group who revised the original materials in the resource. She said, 'The new resource can be used by anyone interested in building healthy

Snapshot from Lambeth 2022



Maia Williams from Trinidad and Tobago shared her hopes that 'men and women can begin to understand each other so that families could begin to be more cohesive ... so that societies could be safer'.

relationships and is accessible to as many people as possible to understand what the Bible does and doesn't say around the relationships between women and men, girls and boys'.

God's Justice includes theological guidelines that highlight the biblical and Christian teachings on the dignity of all humanity and the church's role in upholding them. It also discusses ways to understand gender in the Bible and talks about gender in the church. Gender-based violence and the harmful effects of gender inequalities and injustices in different contexts are explored, as well as biblical support for ending violence and improving relationships to reflect the mutual respect God intends, and how churches can respond. Each topic has questions for reflection and discussion.

'Gender-based violence is a global pandemic. One in three women in her lifetime will experience abuse', Mandy noted. 'This means there is a huge challenge for our churches to break the silence, shame and stigma around abuse, and provide appropriate support. We know that domestic abuse happens in churches too.'

The goal of *God's Justice* is to offer fresh insights and hope both for women and men, including the freedom to become who God created them to be, by mutually affirming and respecting one another in all aspects of life. According to Mandy, this resource can be used in many ways. Small groups might read and discuss the different chapters, using the questions as starting points for conversation about their own



God's Justice:

Theology and Gender Based Violence



What does the Bible say and how should the Church respond?

"To me, ending gender-based violence should be a priority in order to bridge the gap between men and women for justice and peaceful co-existence in the society"
The Revd Dominic Misolo
IFAGE - Kenya.

local context. It can also be a tool for personal study and reflection. She said, 'We very much hope that people using the resource will provide feedback on its use and how we can improve it for future editions.'

in the Foreword to *God's Justice*, the Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Revd Dr Thabo Makgoba, writes: 'As Anglicans, we have no choice but to work to transform anything that obstructs the achievement of God's justice and mars the relationship between men and women, girls and boys'. He points to the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission that urge us to repair injustices in society, confront violence, and seek reconciliation and peace.

God's Justice was available during the Lambeth Conference. It was also the topic of a seminar during the Conference, so that bishops and spouses could consider their leadership in recognising harmful norms or attitudes that lead to unjust and abusive practices in church and society, and to be agents of change for their dioceses.

The resource can be downloaded in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese from the Gender Justice section of the Anglican Communion website: <http://bit.ly/3AR5Wnk>

To find out more about any of the stories in this newsletter, please contact us at
iafn@anglicancommunion.org

We would love to hear from you

The International Anglican Family Network is for Anglicans everywhere, making connections across the Communion and sharing stories of hope, promoting family care, and sustaining the family as the cradle for human dignity. Please do get in touch and be part of the network.

Where you live, what are the greatest pressures on families and family life?

What is being done in your parish, diocese or province to support families who may be fragile and in need?

What is being done in your church to advocate for the family as precious in itself, and as a place for unfolding the Gospel? How are families included as a vital part of mission narratives and strategies?

How are young people's contributions to the mission of the church, their leadership gifts, and especially their potential to use technology to the glory of God, being valued and encouraged?

In your own language, please share your stories and reflections on any or all of these questions. Email iafn@anglicancommunion.org. We look forward to hearing from you and supporting you.

Snapshot from Lambeth 2022



Bishop Mohan Manoraj of Karnataka Southern diocese said that his diocese is working to support rural families by seeking to develop sustainable livelihoods, especially for women.

Prayer

O God, we pray for our family life,
that we all may grow together
in awareness of your love,
that our lives together may reflect
your brightness and your goodness. Amen.

Worship in an Indian Context, The Book of a Thousand Prayers, compiled by Angela Ashwin, page 127

We praise you, Holy Spirit, for calling us
to serve you now,
for baptizing us to represent you
in this broken world.
Help us to be Christ's united body to heal and reconcile,
help us to share Christ's life with everyone. Amen.

A New Zealand Prayer Book



IAFN