

Set my People Free: The Call of the Church against Human Trafficking

'The Lord said, "I have seen the suffering of my people" ... Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Let my people go...'

Preamble...

We, a group of 52 Church leaders from 29 member churches of the Anglican Communion, including Primates, Bishops, clergy and laity met from 30th January 2023 to 2nd February 2023 in Dar es Salam, United Republic of Tanzania for the 4th Triennial International Consultation of the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG). Hosted by the Anglican Church of Tanzania, the theme of our consultation was 'Set My People Free: The Call of the Church against Human Trafficking'.

The choice of Tanzania as the context of our meeting was significant, given the important advances that Tanzania (as a source, transit and destination country for trafficking) has made in recent years in combating human trafficking. Our understanding of human trafficking as a form of modern-day slavery was further deepened through our immersion visit to Zanzibar, which was a hub of the historical East African Slave Trade.

The visit offered participants an opportunity to grapple with the enduring complexities of the Anglican Communion's member churches' missional history. We recognise that right across the world this history is intertwined with complex legacies of slavery which affect diverse groups of people. These include the descendants of the enslaved alongside those who traded and benefitted directly from the labour of the enslaved as well as those whose lands were colonised and those who through violence and genocide seized the land of others displacing local populations and cultures.

Within the context of worship, fellowship, bible studies and exposure visits we had the opportunity to listen to and learn from wide-ranging experiences and expertise covering historical and contemporary instances of humanity's inhumanity to itself.

We offer this communique in a spirit of prayer, praise, penitence and a growing realisation of the need for partnership. We offer this as an affirmation of our faith, an acknowledgement of the complexity around the issue, and our willingness to act in response to God's call to proclaim "Let my people go" in a global context of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

Affirmation:

We affirm the inherent dignity and freedom of all human beings by virtue of being created in the image of God without exception. This common identity as co-bearers of the divine image obligates us not to distort the image of God by objectifying others and dehumanizing ourselves in the process.

Our Trinitarian faith in a God who accompanied Hagar, heard the cries of the Hebrew slaves, and whose Spirit empowered Jesus to proclaim release to the captives calls us as the Church to respond to the sin and scandal of human trafficking from a premise of solidarity. We affirm the need to listen and learn from survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery within our communities and to work in partnership with them, guided by their voices which are rooted in lived experience.

That the proper context of human flourishing is justice at the individual and institutional levels. This requires building and strengthening just institutions that will allow all people to strive for the good life with and for others and calls us to ministries which are pastoral, prophetic and public in nature.

Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge:

The need for the Church to examine our past and repent for its historic and continuing complicity in the enslavement of people and recognise that addressing issues of complicity requires churches and communities to understand that Christian discipleship necessitates active engagement with structural as well as personal transformation.

That our current global system mirrors the imperialism of the past which was founded on the exploitation of people and the planet. These global systems exacerbate the root causes of human trafficking including economic and social inequality, political instability, ethnic conflicts, and climate change and connect them to persistent questions including racism, classism and the exploitation of Indigenous peoples.

That centuries of exploitation and plunder have contributed to the global displacement of people, who have been trafficked and enslaved in their search for a better life.

That though many local churches and the wider community have been involved in addressing the challenges of human trafficking, there is need to build further on these efforts to effectively combat human trafficking and modern day slavery.

That the calamitous and continuing legacies of slavery as well as their entanglement with modern forms of slavery involve lost identities, lost lives, broken families, destroyed childhoods, exploited bodies and long-lasting trauma, all of which necessitate responses that which hold together reparation, accountability, reconciliation and restoration.

That any response to HT and modern slavery needs to be deeply aware of the gendered nature of human trafficking and modern slavery which frequently disproportionately affects women and children. Gendered aspects of trafficking reflect and replicate modes of thinking that instrumentalize women and children and deprive them of autonomy and agency.

That the global contexts of human trafficking and MS are extremely complex and diverse, thereby necessitating the need for deep attentiveness to local realities, legislations, and redress mechanisms in order to respond to this issue in life-affirming ways which can protect, preserve and promote the safety and dignity of survivors.

Action: Our commitment

We believe now is the time for churches to act in ways that are collaborative, courageous and compassionate to address the injustice of human trafficking and modern slavery. Therefore, we commit ourselves to the following actions:

As individual delegates we commit to:

Learn more about human trafficking and modern slavery and their associated complex issues.

Take responsibility for raising awareness of the issue in our own households, churches, and communities.

We urge our churches to:

Publicly acknowledge and work to better understand our complicity in human trafficking and modern slavery in the past and present.

Intentionally work together as member churches across the Anglican Communion to address human trafficking and modern slavery.

Promote and develop best practices to work towards actively eliminating human trafficking and strengthen awareness within churches of effective policies.

Educate and train congregations to be watchful and attentive to their contexts and equip them to read the signs of human trafficking and modern slavery. To be sensitised to practices that may be occurring within their own communities and to ensure congregations are aware of safe methods to report concerns to the relevant authorities.

Commit to being places of sanctuary and safety for all people and to provide appropriate spiritual, emotional and practical support to survivors.

Commit to the Anglican Communion Safe Church Guidelines.

Engage with governments on legislation and policies to address the economic and environmental factors which lead communities to being more vulnerable to human trafficking.

Work alongside enforcement agencies to bring perpetrators to account.

Support survivors by working collaboratively with a wide range of partners including those with lived experience, civil society organisations, ecumenical and inter-faith partners in addressing human trafficking focussing on the preventive and restorative measures.

As USPG we commit ourselves to:

Developing relevant theological resources and facilitating the promotion and creation of networks and resources to support the work of the Anglican Communion

Appreciation...

We wish to express our deep gratitude to the Anglican Church of Tanzania and the Diocese of Dar es Salaam for graciously hosting us and for their considerable support with the transport arrangements and logistics, for the opportunities to worship in local churches and deepen our understanding of the local context and culture, especially through the visit to the Cathedrals in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. We would like to thank all those who contributed to the Consultation in their capacity as speakers, presenters, bible study leaders, interpreters and through leading worship; and to all the members of the USPG Communion Wide Advisory Group, staff and Trustees, for their support. We give thanks to God for the opportunity to come together to share in fellowship and prayer and to deepen our understanding of what God is calling us to as leaders and representatives of the churches and member churches of the Anglican Communion. Grounded in this fellowship, we commit to ensuring that the aspirations of this Consultation are realised within our member churches as we fulfil God's call, individually and collectively, to 'Set your people free'.

The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. "

Signed by Primates and representatives of the following member churches and USPG

The Most Revd Juan David Alvarado America	Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de
The Most Revd Marinez Santos Bassotto	Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil
The Most Revd Albert Chama Africa	The Church of the Province of Central
The Most Revd Leonard Dawea	The Anglican Church of Melanesia
The Most Revd Dr Howard Gregory Indies	The Church of the Province of the West
The Most Revd Michael Lewis and the Middle East	The Province of the Church in Jerusalem
The Most Revd Samuel Sunil Mankhin	The Church of Bangladesh
The Most Revd Carlos Simao Matsinhe	Igreja Anglicana de Mocambique e Angola

The Most Revd Dr Maimbo Mndolwa
The Most Revd Linda Nicholls
The Most Revd Stephen Than Myint Oo
The Most Revd Dharmaraj Rasalam
The Most Revd James R. Wong Yin Song

The Most Revd Mark Strange
Obispo Maximo Rhee Timbang

The Rt Revd Alexander Kobina Asmah

The Rt Revd Sameer Khimla
The Rt Revd Eddie Moral
The Rt Revd Danald Jute

Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath
The Very Reverend Dr Sarah Rowland Jones
The Venerable Emad Basilius
Alexandria
The Revd Canon Titus Ho-Wook Kim
The Revd Joseph Chow
The Revd Chris Frazer

Ms Tomie Kaneko

Ms Pachi Zabala

Mr Nagulan Nesiah

The Revd Dr Duncan Dormor

In attendance

The Rt Revd Derek Kamukwamba
Africa
The Very Revd Orisi Vuki
Zealand and Polynesia
Ven Dr Rienze Perera
The Revd Canon Wadie Far
and the Middle East
The Revd Dr Michael Clarke
Indies
Mrs Esther Kazimani-Pale
Angola
The Ven. Kofi deGraft-Johnson
Dr Agnes Aboum
Moderator, World Council of Churches

The Anglican Church of Tanzania
The Anglican Church of Canada
The Church of the Province of Myanmar
The Church of South India
The Church of the Province of the Indian
Ocean
The Scottish Episcopal Church
Iglesia Filipina Independiente

The Church of the Province of West
Africa

The Church of North India
The Episcopal Church in the Philippines
The Church of the Province of South East
Asia

The Church of England
The Church in Wales
The Episcopal/Anglican Province of

The Anglican Church of Korea
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui
The Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New
Zealand and Polynesia
The Nippon Sei Ko Kai (The Anglican
Communion in Japan)
The Anglican Church of South America

The Church of Ceylon

United Society Partners in the Gospel

The Church of the Province of Central

The Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New

The Church of Ceylon
The Province of the Church in Jerusalem

The Church of the Province of the West

Igreja Anglicana de Mocambique e

General Secretary, CAPA
Anglican Church of Kenya, former

Mr Joel Kelling	Anglican Alliance, The Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East
The Revd Moses Matonya Tanzania	General Secretary, Christian Council of
The Rt Revd Jackson Sosthenes Church of Tanzania	Diocese of Dar es Salaam, Anglican
The Rt Revd Dickson Chilongani Tanzania	Diocese of Dodoma, Anglican Church of
The Rt Revd Elias Chakupewa Tanzania	Diocese of Tabora, Anglican Church of
Canon Bethuel Mlula Tanzania	Provincial Secretary, Anglican Church of
The Revd Jacob Kahemele Dar es Salaam	Dean St Alban's Cathedral, Diocese of

USPG Trustees: Mr John Neilson, Mr Martin Uden and Ms Catherine Wickens

USPG staff: Ms Fran Mate, Ms Rebecca Boardman, the Revd Davidson Solanki, Dr Paulo Ueti, Canon Dr Peniel Rajkumar, Dr Jo Sadgrove, Mrs Ife Olowoniyi, Mr Vijay Christian and Mrs Rachael Anderson.

Interpreters: The Revd Warren Wilson, Dr Paulo Ueti, Ms Rachel Weller.

5. List of Delegates

6. Other points:

- a) We need translations: Swahili, Portuguese, Spanish – also Japanese and Korean
- b) Authority – what is the authority of the document - individual delegates rather than representatives of the churches??

There is much work to be done, in advocacy and knowledge within our own communities, before the greater task of partnering to effectively counter Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. There is also much to celebrate that has already been done, and clear opportunities for greater engagement in the process across the communion.