

Slide 1 – USPG intro slide

Exploring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Jesus, in his ‘manifesto’, taken from the scroll of Isaiah, laid out his priorities for the kingdom of God. He chose 12 men and even more women and in a small corner of the Middle East and began a movement for change. He envisaged a kingdom in which good news is brought to the poor; release is proclaimed to captives; sight is restored to the blind; and the oppressed go free. [Luke 4:18]

Some 2,000 years later, some of those radical ideas have become mainstream! In the year 2000, the United Nations challenged the governments of the world to meet a series of Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015. Goal number one was ‘to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger’.

Slide 2 – The SDG 17 goals diagram

The Millennium Development Goals have been succeeded by what the UN is calling its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which comprise 17 Sustainable Development Goals, known as SDGs. Seventeen is too many to remember easily but, in short, they aim to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and fix climate change.

Slide 3 – The 5 Ps

The SDGs can fall under five headings, all conveniently beginning with the letter ‘P’. These are Prosperity, People, Planet, Peace and Partnership.

Slide 4 – A ‘local’ church at the heart of its community, in the Philippines

So what is the role of the church in all this? Throughout the world, local churches are helping their communities to escape the injustice of poverty in its many guises. The church is always engaged in making present the kingdom of God.

It is heartening then to see that UN Development Programme Administrator Helen Clark is aware of this. She has commented: ‘Faith-based organisations... have an important role to play in reminding us to focus on what really matters to us as human beings in search of well-being.’

And José Riera-Cézanne, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has remarked that ‘faith leaders, religious institutions, communities of faith and faith-based NGOs are carrying out critical development and humanitarian relief activities’.

These people are acknowledging what USPG has always known: If local churches are equipped and empowered they can be a very significant agent of change. And, importantly, unlike some development agencies, the local church doesn’t come and go – the church is a permanent part of its community and will still be there long after development and government agencies have gone home! In many places, the church is the glue that holds a community together.

So let’s see if the mission of the church can be seen in the 5 Ps of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Slide 5 - The first P is for ‘People’.

The UN says: *'We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.'*

Slide 6 – Church community work in the Amazon

USPG is supporting churches in many places in their mission to address these very concerns. The SDGs want to see people fulfilling their potential in dignity and equality. We might like to think in terms of achieving the fullness of life that is God's intention for humanity [John 10:10]. Wherever the church is active in working for the kingdom of God, we see people achieving greater fullness of life through the mission of the local church. For example:

In the Diocese of the Amazon, USPG is supporting the local church to train community outreach activists, who help communities to utilise local talents and resources to address local concerns and issues. One village was so inspired they came together to re-open a community centre that had been closed for 15 years. The centre is now running maths and Portuguese classes for children, while a social worker meets the children's families and talks to them about their rights and how to access government benefits.

Believing in people often results in people believing in themselves – and achieving a greater fullness of life.

Slide 7 - The second P is for 'Planet'.

The UN says: *'We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.'*

Slide 8 – Rising sea levels in Tonga are killing trees and ruining farmland

Climate change and its impact on the environment is a primary concern across the provinces of the Anglican Communion. Many provinces have witnessed first-hand the devastating impact of changing weather patterns on communities that have contributed least to its cause. Part of our Christian mission must be to remind humanity that we are *stewards* of creation, with a responsibility of care.

One USPG-supported initiative that is addressing the issue of climate justice is the Green Schools Programme run by the Church of South India. This programme is teaching students about the importance of safeguarding the environment.

Schools taking part in the Green Schools Programme carry out a 'green audit' of their school that draws upon every subject in the curriculum.

In maths, pupils learn about waste management by measuring the amount of rubbish generated by the school – they are then encouraged to come up with ideas for reducing waste. In biology, pupils learn about composting. In English they write reports on the environment. In computing they complete online forms to record the findings of their audit. In social studies they undertake a campaign to raise awareness about green issues in their local community.

Schools here in Britain and Ireland could be encouraged to follow India's example!

To help Anglican Churches in Britain and Ireland to engage more deeply with this topic, USPG has published a booklet, *Faith in a Changing Climate*, which offers worship resources and practical steps

for addressing the issue of climate justice. Perhaps you could order a few copies and use them in a study group.

Slide 9 – The third P is for ‘Prosperity’.

The UN says: *‘We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.’*

Slide 10 – a picture of people growing vegetables in Zambia

A USPG-supported development programme run by the Anglican Church in Zambia is using the Bible to help people prosper.

It starts with a series of bible studies that emphasise the diversity of talents in a community and the importance of sharing. People are delighted to discover that they each have gifts and skills to offer the community. They are then encouraged to work together to set up projects to boost income or improve the local environment.

Ezekiel, like many men in his culture – and indeed around the world – admitted he used to see his wife, not as a partner, but as a resource for earning money. After taking part in the programme, he and his wife Evelyn started using the trees on their smallholding to make and sell charcoal. With the profits they bought fertilizer and were able to grow a healthy crop of vegetables and maize. Evelyn goes to market to sell the vegetables they grow. The couple has been able to pay their children’s school fees, and they give thanks to God by giving a tithe to their church. Ezekiel said he has changed his outlook on life and now sees his wife in a new light.

In many parts of the world people live in much closer harmony with nature than most of us in Britain and Ireland. Seeking prosperity for *all human beings* might challenge us to think about how we view other people and the cost to them for our own prosperity!

Slide 11 – The forth P is for ‘Peace’.

The UN says: *‘We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.’*

Peace is a major Christian theme! To a world that is never free from conflict, Jesus said ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.’ [Matthew 5:9]

Slide 12 – a picture from an interfaith PROCMURA meeting

One area of USPG’s engagement with this theme is our support of PROCMURA (Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa). PROCMURA’s Peace and Reconciliation Programme seeks to build peace and reconciliation where strife exists and persists. It works with Christian and Muslim leaders, women and youth, governments and society at large. The focus of peace reflects the principle of SHALOM and SALAAM, in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions respectively, as these depict the *total well-being* of humankind.

Where is Shalom needed in your community? How is the church responding?

Slide 13 – The fifth P is for ‘Partnership’.

The UN says: *‘We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened*

global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.'

Slide 14 – USPG volunteer working in the Salvation Army refugee centre in Athens

So, the United Nations is recognising that we need a partnership of *all countries, all stakeholders and all people* if these major development themes are to be addressed effectively. Significantly, the UN has recognised the vital role that is being played by faith communities and personnel, and USPG is engaged with a number of agencies in exploring how we can work together more purposefully and creatively.

A good example of effective partnership is USPG's work among refugees in Greece. We have been supporting refugees by working with the Diocese in Europe and other Christian churches and organisation, including the Orthodox Church, the Salvation Army, the Free Evangelical Church and Christian Aid; and we have been working with non-faith agencies, including our support for three charities working in Greece, called Medical Intervention, The Lighthouse, and The Home Project. USPG has helped to bring these organisations together and co-ordinate a joined-up response to the crisis that is more effective than if each church and organisation worked alone.

No doubt you are also involved in making real the kingdom of God here in your own community in a hundred different ways.

We make real the kingdom of God in our communities when we love unconditionally and share selflessly. As we tread lightly on the earth and consider the global impact of our local actions, we are also making real the kingdom of God well beyond our own communities. Knowing this to be true, even when we are not seeking to be part a global partnership, imagine how much more we could achieve if we chose consciously to cooperate with others – of all faiths and none – to achieve these same goals.

The programmes we have looked at today are just a small sample of the many partnerships USPG is engaged in throughout the Anglican Communion. Each is making real the kingdom in which good news is brought to the poor; release is proclaimed to captives; sight is restored to the blind; and the oppressed go free.

Your partnership is a key factor – both as a church and each of us as individuals. We all have a role to play. Thank you for your partnership with the world church through USPG.

Slide 15 – closing USPG slide