

# GROWING THE CHURCH

## USPG POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR 2011

### A PowerPoint talk for USPG speakers

Note to Speaker: Please feel free to adapt these notes to your own style. There are three versions of the PowerPoint: 1) Change image on mouse-click; 2) Looped with text; 3) Looped without text.

## Growing the Church

I would like to talk to you today about how the church is growing around the world. And not just in terms of numbers but in a whole range of other ways too: Growing in depth, Growing in generosity, Growing in the community, and Growing in learning. We will take a look at each of these in turn, and I will offer examples from USPG's partners around the world.



◀ This photo of a church procession was taken in western Ethiopia, close to the Sudanese border, where the Anglican Church is growing quickly among tribal communities.

But first a word about USPG. For those who don't know, USPG is a 300-year-old Anglican mission agency. In fact, we are exactly as old as the Anglican Communion because it could be said we invented it! Let me explain. In 1701, the Revd Thomas Bray was concerned about the spiritual well-being of English expatriates living in America. So he set up a society – full name: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts – and this society sent priests from the Church of England to minister in America. One of those priests was John Wesley, before he founded Methodism!

The rest is history! The Society's mission grew – expanding from country to country, in many cases introducing Anglicanism – so that today USPG is working with church partners in over 50 countries

By the way, USPG's full name is USPG: Anglicans in World Mission. The USPG part stands for United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. We are United because the original Society amalgamated with UMCA (Universities' Mission to Central Africa) and the Cambridge Mission to Delhi. So the story of USPG is itself a story of growth.

Now, church growth – as we all know – can be a sensitive topic among Anglicans in Britain, where numbers are apparently falling. But it is a different story around the world.

# GROWING THE CHURCH

## Growth in Numbers



### Growth in Numbers

The Anglican Church is growing in many parts of the world, especially Africa and Asia. One reason is that people turn to the Anglican Church because it offers stability and a strong sense of ethics.

◀ Over a thousand people attended a confirmation service at Magila Cathedral, in the Diocese of Tanga, in Tanzania. As with many other countries, church infrastructure in Tanzania is not as comprehensive as in Britain. Dioceses, for example, cover a much larger area, and bishops, clergy and church leaders have many more churches and parishes to preside over. On this occasion, the cathedral had been waiting for months for the bishop to find time to take a confirmation service. So, by the time he arrived, there were dozens of people waiting to be confirmed.

◀ This girl is in her confirmation dress. She walked from her village for miles along dusty lanes to attend the service.

▶ So many turned up that an auxiliary marquee had to be set up outside the cathedral to accommodate the overflow. When was the last time we saw that happening in Britain?



## Growth in Depth



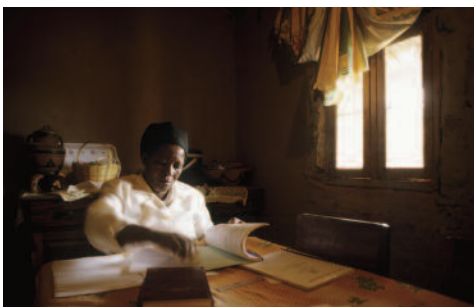
### Growth in Depth

Another example of remarkable church growth comes from Mozambique, where the Anglican Church has been growing at an astonishing rate, with more than 50 new churches and 300 bible study groups established in the Diocese of Niassa in a single year.

◀ However, imagine the surprise of the Bishop of Niassa Mark van Koevering – a USPG Mission Companion – when an anxious priest asked him: ‘Shall we slow down church growth?’ It transpired that the young priest simply didn’t have the experience to support his burgeoning congregation. Which raises the interesting point of how we measure church growth: we can grow in numbers, but we can also lack experience and depth. The need for discipleship training is something prevalent among many churches around the world. In Africa it is sometimes said that Christianity is a mile wide but an inch deep. And that phrase could apply to many other countries, including at times – dare I say it – our own! But we need not feel too downcast. Training programmes are helping to address this need.

◀ This is mother-of-five Otilia Soures. She has lived through turbulent times, including 27 years of civil war. And four years ago, her husband walked out on her. So feeding her family has been a constant challenge. But, despite these hardships, Otilia’s faith has remained strong. She is an active member of her community, helping to support a project for AIDS orphans.

◀ Otilia has also started a course in theology – encouraged by USPG Mission Companion the Revd Helen van Koevering – which is equipping her to relate more meaningfully with those around her: a good example of growth in depth.



## Growth in Learning



### Growth in Learning

We can draw lessons from many churches around the world that are investing heavily in training. In particular, there is a desire to equip leaders – lay or ordained – with both theological knowledge and practical skills.

◀ This is the Revd Solomon Frimpong, who trained at the USPG-supported St Nicholas Seminary, in Cape Coast, Ghana. He is now a priest in the Diocese of Koforidua. This is what he told USPG: 'Training has helped me to know more about how to relate to people from different cultures and backgrounds. I have also been trained in youth ministry and administration, which will help with managing churches. I hope to help the church to grow. My aim is to become a good priest and a servant to those around me.'

◀ By supporting the training of leaders, USPG is helping Anglican Churches to equip themselves for effective mission and ministry. This lesson has applied from the New Testament up to the present day: it is through nourishment on spiritual food that we grow in faith.

▶ Here's a nice picture showing how people in Ghana aren't afraid to proclaim their faith in public.



## Growth in the Community



### Growing in the Community

A growing church will find it difficult to contain itself! Instead of becoming a 'holy huddle', it will break out into the community, bursting with the good news! Does this sound like your church?! Well, I'm not trying to make anyone feel guilty: each culture has its own restrictions and limits. We can only do the best we can. But let's have a look at what's happening in Bangladesh – one of the world's most densely populated countries.

The list of outreach activities of the Church of Bangladesh is quite astounding. Take a deep breath!

◀ There is an education programme that is having a huge impact on the lives of children from marginalised communities.

◀ This is women's empowerment programme that is providing skills training and micro-finance loans to support business initiatives. This programme also provides support groups for women who might otherwise have little contact with the world outside their home.

▶ The church is also providing safe wells for villages where naturally-occurring arsenic is poisoning the water.

Another Anglican initiative is a campaign to tackle human trafficking.

The Rt Revd Michael Baroi, Bishop of Dhaka, told USPG: 'The Church of Bangladesh is a church for the people and of the people.'



# GROWING THE CHURCH

## Growth in Generosity



### Growth in Generosity

Those words of the Bishop of Dhaka lead us neatly onto our fifth aspect of church growth: Growth in Generosity. We have seen how growth in faith and in learning can inspire outreach into the local community. It is a desire – a compulsion, even – to share what we have received with those around us.

◀ A good example of this type of generosity can be seen in South Africa, where both the Dioceses of Zululand and Umzimvubu have set up community gardening programmes. These programmes, which have received support from USPG, have provided employment and food security, as well as generating a small income for families and orphans who often live below the poverty line.

◀ The church encouraged the people to farm waste land, in many cases enabling villagers to relearn traditional agricultural skills which had been forgotten during the devastating years of Apartheid and large-scale economic migration.

▶ And out of the crops they grow, the people are helping to raise funds to support a project for AIDS orphans: the people are giving out of the little they have received. Perhaps a modern day example of the widow's mite.



## Growing the Church with USPG in 2011



### Growing the Church with USPG in 2011

And so we come to the end of this whistlestop tour of the world church. I hope you have found it encouraging to see how the church is growing in many ways:

- Growing in numbers;
- Growing in depth;
- Growing in learning;
- Growing in the community through outreach;
- Growing in generosity.

◀ My hope is that, through these examples of USPG-supported projects, we can all feel inspired that God is active and changing lives.

◀ And, finally, a plea to you and your church: Please make a donation to USPG to help ensure that the projects and programmes we have seen today – and many more – can safely continue, so that many more lives might be transformed.

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