



STRATEGY 2019-2021

Sharing in God's mission worldwide

**† UNITED SOCIETY
PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL**

USPG STRATEGY 2019-2021

This document outlines the broad approach and the direction of travel, and seeks to map out a vision and approach for USPG, clarify its mission statement and values, state primary strategic aims, and the main strategic programmes. It seeks to draw out USPG's core identity and strengths, identify themes and work that provide a unity of purpose, and to build on that which is innovative and distinctive about USPG.

Our strategy will be regularly reviewed in light of available resources, key partnerships and the external environment. In particular, in June 2019 USPG will hold its Triennial International Consultation in Barbados. Attended by Archbishops from across the Communion, (or their representatives), this gathering provides an opportunity for senior leaders to reflect on mission today and inform the strategic direction of USPG.

I. Vision, identity and ethos

This section is intended to outline a theological understanding of the work of USPG and thus provide a framework for our strategic thinking.

Our life in Christ

Our life is 'in Christ'; we are drawn into that life by the work of the Holy Spirit, coming to see ourselves as children of one heavenly Father, and others – all others - as made in the image of God, as brothers and sisters, all precious in God's sight; of equal dignity irrespective of the divisions and distinctions made in theory and practice by human cultures and institutions.

It is in the very nature of God to reach out in love and compassion; and so it is that the Son is sent by the Father, and the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son; and the Spirit goes forth into the world, always 'ahead of us', drawing people into the life of the Trinity, a community of three persons, an eternal dance of transforming love and mutuality into which we have been invited to participate.

The Church is thus forever and essentially a pilgrim body; a community of missionary disciples. It is created in the wake of mission and discovers its nature and is renewed in its identity by the activity of mission.

It is through encounter with others that we become more fully 'in Christ'; more fully brothers and sisters to one another. There is then an open, porous, generous, hospitable quality to the nature of church when it is most fully authentic, most fully itself.

To be faithful is to be faithful to the call of Jesus through the Spirit, to be open to encounter, to being renewed. In practical terms this means following after the pattern of Jesus Christ who reached beyond the most obvious 'inner circles' of his world to engage with, to find faith in, even to be surprised and delighted by the words and actions of, for example, the Syro-Phoenician woman (*Mark 7:24-30*), the Samaritan woman at the well (*John 4:1-26*) or the Roman Centurion (*Matthew 8:5-15*).

Inter-cultural encounters are thus central to the Gospels; as indeed they are to the early Church – a theme repeated throughout the book of *Acts*. Indeed, it is exactly the extraordinary and transforming encounters with the Gentile world that led to fundamental developments in the life of the early Christian community as it discerned what its identity 'in Christ' meant beyond its Jewish inheritance. It is only through this outward movement that followers of 'the Way' came to be identified as 'Christians' (*Acts*

11). Composed of people from many nations and with quite different levels of agency and autonomy ('slave and free'), the early Church sought to be faithful to and united in Christ, sharing together in that extraordinary possession: 'the glorious liberty of the children of God' (*Romans 8:21*).

United Society Partners in the Gospel

We are an Anglican mission agency:

USPG exists to participate in this, God's mission; to share, alongside others, in God's saving, redemptive, transforming mission. It does so mindful that its history is that of being an integral part of an Empire Church in which the spread of Christianity was tied to British military and political power; that much of its historic missionary activity ran alongside and within the structures of British imperialism and colonialism. And further that the legacies of that history, both acknowledged and unacknowledged, remain ever-present. Indeed, part of USPG's vocation involves wrestling with, and where possible, partaking in the journey towards the redemption of aspects of that history.

As a consequence of imperial geography, USPG through its antecedent Mission Agencies, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Cambridge Mission to Delhi and the Borneo Mission Association, was historically linked more closely to some churches within the Anglican Communion. Today USPG honours those links, but it seeks to maintain good relationships, inform conversations and foster partnerships across the churches of the Communion.

USPG seeks to be faithful to the Gospel imperative to transform the lives of individuals, churches and communities. If it is to be faithful to Christ it will, inevitably, be radical in character: for Christ was radical. It will seek to reach out beyond the circles of privilege, and to ignore, dispute or confront many of the distinctions that the 'powers and principalities' draw between peoples and cultures. Mindful of the distortions of power in all its guises, USPG seeks to speak and act in the name of Him who embraced powerlessness; who 'did not seek to grasp equality with God' (*Phil 2:6*); who hung upon the Cross, abandoned, beyond the city walls.

USPG is then an agency for mission: We seek to advance God's mission through the actions of proclaiming, speaking, writing, encouraging, bringing people together, stimulating dialogue, creating safe spaces, supporting initiatives and projects that express something of the love of God.

Participating in God's mission, we seek to work always and everywhere in a spirit of deep and attentive partnership with churches across the Communion, and with a range of ecumenical partners. We seek to engage in patterns of mutual encounter and learning and to deepen our understanding of one another, that together in company we may as pilgrims participate in God's transforming, healing and reconciling power.

Seeking to be faithful in our discipleship to the witness of the Scriptures and to our understanding of Christ as fully and truly human, fully and truly divine, USPG's understanding of mission is deeply incarnational and therefore instinctively holistic. That is, in our faithfulness to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom, and following his example as Healer and Teacher, our participation in mission seeks the transformation of whole persons and communities. We seek to act in ways that acknowledge and affirm the human desire to live a full life with dignity and agency and access to education, livelihood and healthcare; with and for others in community; and within institutional structures that are just and

equitable. Thus USPG has a long tradition of supporting mission initiatives which embrace the promotion of good health, education and community development.

Distinctively relational

USPG will strive to engage in mission in such a way that what we do and how we do it is genuinely participatory and transformative in character. We will be distinctively relational. As a consequence, those of us who are members of staff, trustees and volunteers within the UK should expect to be transformed personally and as an organisation as we engage with God's Mission. Conscious of the many legacies of colonialism and of the ways in which contemporary power is exercised that replicate old patterns, we will seek to engage in genuine dialogue that is respectful, mutually supportive and genuinely empowering. An integral part of such dialogue is that we will seek to be mutually accountable.

Being distinctively relational in its approach, USPG strives for a deep mutuality; rooted in the understanding that we must celebrate together as subjects and not engage with one another as objects – having a mutually accountable approach so that we are transformed together. This precludes all forms of representing the other as passive or simply recipients of charity or philanthropy. Even those in the most challenging of circumstances can be agents of transformative change rather than simply beneficiaries of the charity of others. We are called to participate in solidarity with others, alongside, accompanying them in their struggle. We must continually interrogate our mission strategies and mission theologies to ensure that we do not collude with disabling patterns of dependency.

Stewardship and giving

As an organisation that has expressed a clear desire not to engage in activities that induce dependency, we have a clear responsibility to ensure that, in pursuit of financial resource, we do not inadvertently replicate or foster attitudes that, in reality, we would like to change.

The gift of money always carries with it the 'spirit' of the giver. It is inextricably tied to relationship; and thus has a moral and affective dimension. Within the activity of fundraising there is always the possibility of exploitation and deception: that the prospect of money will distort the character of the activity for which it is raised. Wisdom and discernment are required at every stage. Those who seek to give their money to USPG must have a clear sense of how it is spent, but their interests or agendas should not influence or distort the direction of the organisation's work.

With respect to giving from our churches we should not seek to replicate donor/recipient models that downplay or deny relationality – in which 'we' give to 'them ... over there' without any real understanding of who 'they' (our sisters and brothers in Christ) are. Likewise, in relation to our partners, (deeply conscious of the many damaging legacies of colonialism) we should resist requests for financial support which foster dependency rather than build capacity.

Anglican Identity

In terms of practical outworking this orientation to mission takes place in the context of our Anglican identity and ecclesiology. USPG treasures the structures of the Anglican Communion. It works in close consultation with Primates as well as Provincial and Diocesan frameworks, and engages in partnership and collaborative working that strengthens the mission capacity of provinces and dioceses – and indeed the whole Communion.

II. Mission and Values

This understanding of our mission and approach is captured in the following Mission statement:

USPG is the Anglican mission agency, founded in 1701, that partners churches and communities worldwide in God's mission to enliven faith, strengthen relationships, unlock potential and champion justice.

Values

We are faithful: We seek to be faithful to the call of Jesus Christ and to our vocation to serve the churches and communities of the Anglican Communion in mission since our foundation in 1701.

We are radical: We seek to respond to the challenge of working for the Kingdom of God. In pursuit of that radically inclusive vision, we are willing to ask questions, to take risks and to reflect theologically on our broken world, and upon our own work as we seek to challenge injustice.

We stand in solidarity: We seek to participate in God's mission in solidarity with those from our partner churches in ways that cherish and honour their dignity and agency as they give voice to their response to God's call in the life of their churches, communities and nations.

We respect context: We seek to work across cultures for the benefit of all people, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, age or beliefs. We recognise that this commitment involves humility and a willingness to learn and be changed.

III. Strategic Aims

1. Rethink mission

We believe that we are called to participate in God's mission through word and deed; called to discern what 'the Spirit is saying to the churches'. We believe that to be faithful to Christ, we are called into a life of deeper dialogue and more profound encounter with others. We therefore seek to engage creatively to 'rethink mission' in a rapidly changing world by helping to bring people from different parts of the Global church into mutually enriching conversation to increase cross-cultural understanding and deepen our discipleship as inter-cultural Christians.

As USPG we will seek to support, facilitate and encourage creative initiatives in missiological theology to develop and deepen contextual and inter-cultural thinking across the Anglican Communion. USPG will facilitate the sharing of experiences and promote mutual appreciation of contextual theologies through a range of engagements, conferences, events and educational opportunities, as well as seek to support the development of collaborative and accountable leadership through accompaniment programmes and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

2. Energise Church and community

We share in Christ's mission, which speaks of a proclamation that is accompanied by action; by a mission engagement that is holistic and refuses to make artificial distinctions between personal faith and action in the world. Following Christ's example as Teacher and Healer, we seek the transformation of persons and communities through the proclamation of the good news in word and in a concern with all those aspects of human living that bring fullness of life - health, education, wellness, livelihoods etc.

As USPG we will act in ways to energise churches and their communities by strengthening the capacity of the Church to enliven faith, deepen relationships, unlock potential and work for justice. We will seek to support the building of provincial and diocesan capacity for mission by drawing on our experience from different parts of the world-wide church and through a deepening and constantly renewed understanding of the leadership and structures of the Anglican Church at Communion, Provincial and Diocesan level world-wide, including within the provinces of Britain and Ireland. Through the promotion of opportunities for learning from different contexts and cultures we will promote and share effective ways of conducting mission that build up the Church.

3. Champion justice

At the radical heart of the teaching of Jesus lies the proclamation of the coming reign of God – of justice and peace – for which we pray daily; a prayer echoed in the hearts of many who experience the indignities, deprivations and violations that injustice brings. Acknowledging Christ as the only true authority, Christians are called to speak boldly against injustice; to name the corruption and injustices of the world; to remind all manifestations of human power that God is impartial and knows no distinction, that all are made in God's image, have an inherent dignity and that ways of speaking or acting that are dehumanising are under the judgment of God alone.

As USPG we seek to champion justice by creating and enhancing networks and connections that enable partners to be a prophetic voice; through knowledge-sharing and learning exchange to influence policy development and practice regionally and internationally; and by tackling injustice through the support of locally prioritised initiatives that address the injustices associated with gender, climate, migration, the human rights of indigenous people and inter-religious living. To achieve these goals, we will strengthen our relationships with a range of partners within the Church and the world, and increase our ability to influence others within networks through the value added by our research and evaluation activities.

IV. Six strategic programmes

The strategy will be delivered through six strategic programmes that cut across the different teams within USPG. The delivery of these programmes are the responsibility of all within the organisation.

A. Mission theology

Our Aim is to support, facilitate and encourage creative initiatives in missiological theology within the Anglican Communion and to provide opportunities for dissemination and wider discussion. For example: USPG's work with the Asian Theological Academy and the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, Exchanging Places and its 'Rethinking Mission' conference.

B. Leadership development

Our Aim is to assist in the development of collaborative and mutually accountable leadership within the Anglican Communion. For example: USPG's support for exchanges of theological students and faculty, or its work on episcopal accompaniment.

C. Strengthening capacity

Our Aim is to accompany the provinces and dioceses of the Anglican Communion as they further develop their capacity to deliver their mission through integrated programmes that serve the needs of their churches and communities in holistic mission. For example, through USPG's Festina loan scheme, or initiatives facilitating the development of provincial strategy.

D. Mission Engagement in Britain & Ireland

Our Aim is to strengthen and equip the churches of Britain and Ireland to engage in world-wide mission through developing USPG's engagement with dioceses and a wide range of church networks, and providing opportunities for individuals to experience the world-wide church. For example, through USPG's Journey with Us and Expanding Horizons programmes.

E. Policy Development and alliance-building

Our aim is to provide high quality research about faith-based mission and development that informs best practice and influences secular and religious policy- and decision- makers. For example, through USPG's work on the Joint Learning Initiative and its engagement with the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development.

F. Supporting locally prioritised initiatives

Our Aim is to strengthen churches in the Anglican Communion as they seek to tackle injustice by sharing skills, experience and resources to support locally prioritised initiatives. For example, through USPG's work with the Diocese of Durgapur in the Church of North India as it tackles human trafficking or its work on climate justice with Hope for the Future.

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