

The Anglican Witness to the Mission of God

Anglican Frontier Missions Conference

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The Very Rev. Canon Patrick Pervez Augustine, D.Min. DD.

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We belong to the world family of churches known as the Anglican Communion. The Anglican family consists of an estimated 80 million Christians who are members of 44 different churches. These make up 34 provinces, 4 United Churches, and 6 other churches, spread across the globe.

Listed below are the 44 members Churches, arranged by member church or by country.

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia

The Anglican Church of Australia

The Church of Bangladesh

Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil

The Anglican Church of Burundi

The Anglican Church of Canada

The Church of the Province of Central Africa

Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America

Province de L'Eglise Anglicane Du Congo

The Church of England

Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean

The Church of Ireland

The Nippon Sei Ko Kai (The Anglican Communion in Japan)

The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & The Middle East

The Anglican Church of Kenya

The Anglican Church of Korea

The Anglican Church of Melanesia

La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico

The Church of the Province of Myanmar (Burma)

The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)

The Church of North India (United)

The Church of Pakistan (United)

The Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea

The Episcopal Church in the Philippines

Province de L'Eglise Anglicane au Rwanda

The Scottish Episcopal Church

Church of the Province of South East Asia

The Church of South India (United)

Anglican Church of Southern Africa

The Anglican Church of South America

Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan & Sudan

The Anglican Church of Tanzania

The Church of the Province of Uganda

The Episcopal Church

The Church in Wales

The Church of the Province of West Africa

The Church in the Province of the West Indies

Extra Provincial:

The Church of Ceylon (E-P to the Archbishop of Canterbury)

Iglesia Episcopal de Cuba

Bermuda (Extra-Provincial to Canterbury)

The Lusitanian Church (E-P to the Archbishop of Canterbury)

The Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain (E-P to the Archbishop of Canterbury)

Falkland Islands (Extra-Provincial to Canterbury)¹

The story of this faith community started in 596 A.D., when an anxious Augustine with 40 equally fearful monks, set out from Rome for England. He had not gone very far, when murmuring among his team and his own fears of that hostile and savage country, Britain, overwhelmed him. The party turned back to Rome, but Gregory the Great would not sympathize with their fears. He reminded them that they were called to a life of prayer and that they must have faith in the passionate commitment they share - to witness to the claims of Christ. If they were loyal, he told them, they need not fear the “barbarous, fierce and pagan” warriors of Britain.

According to the historian, Bede, Gregory wrote to the party, “My very dear sons, it is better never to undertake any high enterprise than to abandon it when once begun...with the help of God you must carry out this holy task which you have begun. Be constant and zealous in carrying out this enterprise which, under God’s Guidance, you have undertaken.” The origin of the Anglican Church is through the work and ministry of scared, weak and frail human beings, but in the end they were obedient to their call to be missionaries to the native Britons.

What is the basis and motivator for these “scared, weak and frail human beings” to risk their lives to be missionaries to the native Britons? For the answer we will have to look into the textbook of the Mission of God we know as Bible. The God of the Bible is a missionary God. David Bosch in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* gives us this definition of Mission of God – *Missio Dei*:

¹ The Anglican Communion Official website

Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or stoeriology. The classical doctrine of the *mission Dei* is God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the Church into the world.²

Therefore, God has called into existence a people to participate with God in the accomplishment of that mission. “Mission arises from the heart of God himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God.”³

Biblical Basis for the Mission of God:

The Bible tells us that God did send many people. But the range of things for which people were sent is staggeringly broad. “Sending” language is used in all the following stories:

1. Joseph was sent (unwittingly at first) to be in a position to save lives in a famine (Gen 45:7).
2. Moses was sent (unwillingly at first) to deliver people from oppression and exploitation (Ex. 3:10).
3. Elijah was sent to influence the course of international politics (1 Kings 19: 15-18).
4. Jeremiah was sent to proclaim God’s Word (Jer. 1:7).
5. Jesus claimed the words of Isaiah, that he was sent to preach good news, to proclaim freedom to give sight for the blind, and to offer release from oppression (Lk. 6:16-19; cf. Is. 61:1).
6. On the mountain side, the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared before the disciples with the word of the Great Commission, his final words: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you (Matthew 28: 19-20).

The Great Commission is central to the life and work of the Christian Church. In the other Gospels we also read of Jesus sending his disciples with a mission. In Luke’s Jesus commissions his followers to go to Jerusalem, Judaea and the ends of the earth. In John’s Jesus says, “As the Father sent me, so I send you.” In the book of Acts Paul and Barnabas were sent with famine relief (Acts 11:27-30). Later they were sent for Evangelism and church planting (Acts 13: 1-3). Many unnamed brothers and sisters were sent out as itinerant teachers for the sake of the truth of the gospel. One of them was St. Thomas, a reluctant missionary, who travelled to my native land of the Sub-Continent of India. The story goes like this:

² Guder, Darrell L. *Missional Church, A Vision for the sending of the Church in North America*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, Pp.5,5.

³ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Plea for Double Listening*, Leichester: IVP, 1992. Pp. 335.

According to the *Acta Thomae*, the apostles divided up the world for their missionary labors, and India fell to Thomas. However, Thomas claimed that he was not healthy enough and that a Hebrew could not teach Indians; even a vision of Christ could not change his mind. Then in 46 AD, Christ appeared to a merchant and sold Thomas to him as a slave for his master, King Gondophares. He was taken to the northwestern part of India, present day of Pakistan. One story suggests that Thomas offered to build a palace for the Indian king that would last forever. The king gave him money, which Thomas gave to the poor. When asked to show his progress, St. Thomas explained that the palace he was building was in heaven, not on earth. Ultimately, after giving into God's will, Thomas was freed from slavery. He planted seeds for the new Church, forming many parishes and building many churches along the way.

To this day, Saint Thomas is venerated as the Apostle of India. In fact, there exists a population of Christians along the Malabar Coast, on the western coast of India, who lay claim to conversion by St. Thomas. Their tradition holds that he built seven churches, was martyred during prayer by a spearing on the "Big Hill" near Madras, and was buried in Mylapore on the east coast of India.⁴ In 1945 British archeologists found ruins of the old city of Taxila part of Gondophares' kingdom and there you may visit the preaching room of St. Thomas. It is eighteen miles away from Islamabad, Pakistan's capital city. I served in Pakistan as rector/vicar of Rawalpindi-Islamabad.

The Apostles and church's mission for all of us to say and do is to bear witness to the truth that the Lord is God and there is no other, that Jesus has been given the Name that is above all names, and that there is "no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved", (Acts 4:14).

The primary mission of God's people is to get out there and spread the Word, witness, evangelize, tell people about Jesus and how to get saved. It is not what we notice happening in the church in the West. Most of the main line churches in the West for the last many decades has been in decline as we have not been faithful to our call to witness to the saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have been too busy to be relevant, addressing the issues of our society. Our inner squabbling with legal fights over turfs and divisive theological interpretations have weakened our witness. The church in the west is distracted and losing her first love and call to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 3:15-16 we are told:

I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

⁴ Sources: Catholic Encyclopedia, by Herbert Thurston; For All The Saints, by Katherine Rabenstein

I hope we do not have to face such a judgment of God, but we must get busy in the business of the Lord.

On the other side of the world we observe Church in the Southern Cone in spite of poverty and disease; while persecution is growing they remain much firm in their faith. Millions of Christians in those areas of the world live in constant danger of persecution or forced conversion from either governments or Islamic militants and communist regimes. Christianity is flourishing wonderfully among the poor and persecuted, while it atrophies among the rich and secure secular societies in the West. I have personally witnessed the fervor of faith of the persecuted churches in the Middle East, in Sudan and in Pakistan. In 1996 after I visited the church in Pakistan and Sudan I wrote in my personal journal:

“The living faith of the persecuted church has grown from the Cross of Christ. The Cross has become their proud symbol of strength to live and die for Jesus Christ. In the sign of Cross they conquer the forces of darkness, oppression, hatred and evil. To them, the Cross represents their daily struggle, the pain of betrayal, suffering, affliction and the triumphant faith to follow Jesus. ‘For the message about the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the POWER OF GOD’ (1 Corinthians 1:17.)⁵”

It is such power of God we are called to witness. It is often said that the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 was the first evangelist. And this is all the more amazing in that she seemed to suffer triple disqualification for such a role—being a foreigner, a woman (whose testimony was not counted valid in Jewish courts at that time), and someone with serious moral and social questions hanging over her domestic circumstances. But she did what any witness should do—became a self-replicating evangelistic force.

We are “gospel people” and sharing the gospel in all possible ways is the essence of the mission of God’s people, which is to bring good news to a world where bad news is depressingly endemic. It is in such reality the Rev. Tad de Bordenave invited a few of us in early 1990’s to meet with him for Bible study and prayer. He was then serving as Rector of a large parish, St. Matthews Episcopal Church, in Richmond. David B. Barret, founding editor to the world Christian Encyclopedia and a pioneer advocate for people groups still unreached with the Gospel, was our mentor. He then worked for the Foreign Mission Board of the Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. He encouraged us to adopt 25 of the least un-evangelized people groups.

A new Mission Society “Anglican Frontier Mission” (AFM) in the Anglican Communion was inaugurated in the chapel of the Diocese of Virginia in Richmond on December 2, 1994. It was the feast day of Channing Moore Williams, the Missionary Bishop in China and Japan in 1910. Bishop Williams was also the great uncle of Rev. Tad de Bordenave. The Rt. Rev. Peter James

⁵ Patrick P. Augustine. *Hear My People’s Cry, Third Edition, self-published 2009, p.16.*

Lee, Bishop of Virginia, over the inaugural service and became AFM first patron. Tad de Bordenave resigned from being the Rector of St. Matthews in Richmond and accepted to be the first director of AFM. There were hardly any funds and much financial support for this new missionary venture. Tad is a man of great faith and perseverance. He boldly pressed on to present the case of the unreached people groups before the Episcopal Church and within the Anglican Communion. In 1998 Tad and my wife, Myra, went to United Kingdom to set up a booth at the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Bishops. AFM was the only missionary organization to present the case of the unreached before the whole Anglican Communion. I was also present at Lambeth 1998 Conference as the advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury. We held meetings with the Anglican Bishops during the lunch breaks to advocate the case of the unevangelized. The AFM Nigeria came into being through these interactions at Lambeth.

Tad de Bordenave and I traveled to Pakistan to explore areas where the Gospel had not reached among people groups. There we met a brother named Ifrahim Matthews who has the same passion to reach with the Gospel to Moslems in this most dangerous place on earth. We prayed with him that God will open doors in closed areas of Pakistan. Later, I went in 2000 and 20002 to visit with Ifrahim the Northwestern areas of Pakistan. Let me share with you the following story Ifrahim shared with me on October 25, 2014:

“Own my Vision”



Azad Kashmir! A Vision, A Challenge.

It was a pleasant morning of late spring in the year 2002. My phone rang up early morning. Rev. Patrick Augustine was on the other end of the line telling me to get ready immediately for a long trip to Azad Kashmir in order attend an emergent meeting at a refugee camp in Azad Kashmir. I was used to this kind of travel. I hurried, got ready and preceded to the meeting point.

Trip to Muzzafarbad in AK was my long time desire since my college days. It took us Three hours while passing through scenic views of the Valley to reach our destination. On arrival at the refugee camp we found several people waiting for us. We were given a warm welcome. Rev. Patrick right away went into a meeting to be conducted by the camp dwellers while sitting on bare wooden benches. On the contrary, I preferred to mingle with young lads sitting a little farther away curiously watching the folks at the meeting.

These young lads had nothing to do as it was the vacation time in the local School. In response to my query they showed me their school -- a 10x15 wide room with only a mattress to sit on.

The boys were keen to study, but they had no books. As I carry books to give away, I searched my bag and found two copies of the New Testament along with 17 copies of the "Book of Proverbs" in Urdu language. I distributed all the books among them and soon they spread out in the woods and absorbed themselves in reading. Their eagerness to read was amazing.

After an hour or so, Rev.Patrick was done with his business and we were led to a place for lunch. The young boys literally begged me to promise to return with more books. We finished the lunch and headed back for another 3 hours of journey through the night to our destination.



On our way back we stopped at the town of Kohala, which is situated right on the bank of River Jhelum, a natural boundary between Pakistan and the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. We were stopped by the guards at Khohala Bridge. This old bridge was narrow and could only manage one-way traffic. Amazingly, there was a long queue of vehicles waiting for the "go signal", on the both side of the bridge.

While waiting for our turn, Rev.Patrick and I left the vehicle to take a little stroll. I narrated to Rev.Patrick my concerns about the non-availability of books in those refugee camps...He listened keenly to what I had to say, sighed deeply and then said in a wishful tone. "I wish someday I could baptize the people of Kashmir in this water of River Jhelum"

Little did I know that this is going to be a prophet utterance and that someday Our Lord will really grant me the honor to baptize several Kashmiris and establish a Kashmiri speaking church in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

Kashmir had been focus of our prayer attention since then. The Lord opened the door for us miraculously on 8th October 2006 by shaking the whole land. A huge earthquake took place. Even though it was an unprecedented tragedy in the history of the country, Christians were the first ones to respond to the effects of catastrophe and took relief goods to the very far-flung areas of AK. Two years later in April 2010 Potohar Fellowship in cooperation with Adaila Evangelical Congregation conducted the first Easter Service in a house in the small town of Dadyal in the house of late Babu Samuel .This turned out to be a commission service for one of our staff Br.Arshad Masih. Who actually discovered the old Christian family living in the land of AK.

Gul Pur's old Make Shift Chapel

In a nearby town of Gul pur, Nazir Masih, the head of another family in Gul pur, had a tale to tell. According to the tale, "Sahara Mash, a Christian was a fugitive, who came to this area as a result of condemnation by the Maharajah of Kashmir in 1933 on charges of killing a cow by throwing it down

from a high cliff, and on slaughtering it for eating purposes. He settled in this area of thick jungle to hide himself from the further wrath of Maharaja of Kashmir. This whole area was a dense jungle. Later, he built a makeshift Chapel in the same place for the purpose of worship. Over the years he fenced a large piece of land which was declared his property after the Partition of Kashmir when Pakistan came into existence in 1947.



Gulper Jungle had developed into a small but modern town. Many of its Muslim inhabitants had managed to send their family member to UK. Most of them are settled there.

Shaera Masih's descendants are the only known native Christians. They worshiped in a makeshift chapel which still exists. In stark contrast, beautiful Masques have been built all around the area. The old Chapel has become a symbol of disgrace to the family, but they have no way out.

This Tent Chapel needs to be replaced badly. The Family had donated a Sizable piece of Land to Potohar Ev. Outreach Fellowship to build an adequate Chapel. It should be a befitting building in the middle of many Mosques. An estimated cost of 25,000 US\$ is envisioned. It would also serve as Centre for teaching for Nonresident Christians who come to the area as employs for the Govt. departments including army personal. Potohar Fellowship has taken up the Challenge. The Land had been marked and dedicated on the 22nd of June, 2014., but we don't have any funds to erect a Chapel on it.

Chapel

The Proposed Modal of the New

We invite you to join us and be part of this blessing through your prayers and financial support.

Would You Like To Join Us?

Ifrahim Akhter Mathew,



24th Oct 2014



Today there are over two billion people on our planet who are yet hear to hear the good news of the gospel. Among these are 25 least evangelized people groups AFM adopted to pray and bring to them joy of saving grace of Jesus. Majority of them live in regions where Muslims live and face horrendous social injustice issues, such as human trafficking, violence, corruption, lack of education, and poverty. Our fears lead us to believe their transformation is a hopeless cause, even though we claim to have the hope of the world.⁶

The Gospel of Jesus provides hope to our human society at every level - political, legal, familial, and the like. AFM is committed to reaffirm our conviction to the truth and uniqueness of the gospel that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, that the Cross and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth have inaugurated a new creation. Into this kingdom we invite those in the world who yet have to know the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was scandalous when it was first proclaimed in the twenty-first century. We affirm our faith this morning as AFM Board that Jesus Christ is unique because in Him alone the biblical God accomplished his biblically revealed plan for the salvation

⁶ Frontiers webpage statement.

of whole of humankind. It is an enormous privilege to be called by God's name and entrusted with God's Mission.

We hear those words of Jesus in the Great Commission "Make disciples of all the nations." As Lord of heaven and earth, Jesus was more aware of the sheer scale of that concept—"all the nations"—than any of his disciples could have been. At the same time the call of Jesus puts before us the importance of urgency of the task of making it possible for that to be the case—that men and women of all peoples around the world should have the opportunity to hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in a way they can understand, and to respond to it in repentance, faith and obedience. In our world today there are millions of individuals who have never yet even heard the name of Jesus Christ and the good news of what God has done through His Cross and resurrection for the salvation of the world. Millions still wait for any portion of the Word of God to exist in their mother tongue.

Will we as a board reaffirm our conviction, desire and will to pray and to reach the 25 least evangelized people groups? In Psalm 96 the word Mission is a matter of singing the new song of the Lord—the new song that celebrates the Lord's name, salvation, glory and mighty deeds—and then inviting the nations to join in.

*The Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord
And his Messiah and he will reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:15).*