

Evangelism

A study leaflet based on experience in the linked dioceses of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Suffolk and Kagera, Tanzania

Exploring the Link

Kagera

Kagera's population is about 40% Christian & 40% Muslim. The rest are a mixture of religions including Hindu & traditional African religion.

Churches in Kagera are growing rapidly, mostly through the work of 485 lay Evangelists - men and women trained on a 6 month course at KTCTC (Kagera Technical and Christian Training Centre) to be worship leaders, pastors and evangelists. Kagera's evangelists have a similar role to our Diocese's Readers and Lay Elders.

Christians in Kagera show God's loving concern for the whole of people's lives in practical ways, through providing education and health care, including for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Kagera too has nominal Christians, ie people who come to church mainly for baptisms, weddings or funerals; but 'among even nominal Christians there would be a fuller acquaintance with at least the basics of the Christian story than is true in Britain'.

Hugh & Jay Williamson Report Sept 2006

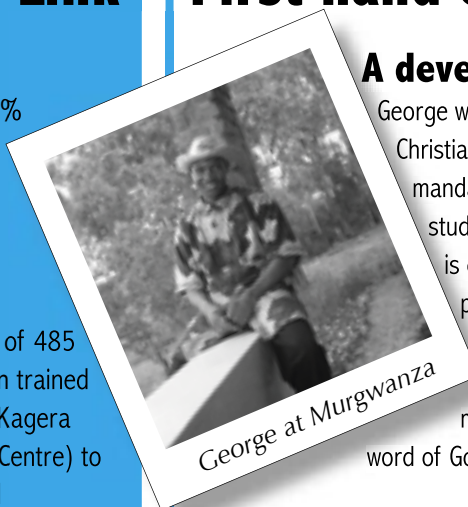
Suffolk

In the UK, 72% of adults in the 2001 census described themselves as Christian. On any one Sunday less than 3% of Suffolk's population will attend a Christian service – but that does mean over 19,000 adults and children! People do look to the Church at turning points in their lives (baptisms, weddings and funerals), and times of national crisis. About 10% of people will have some contact with Church over Christmas. Church of England schools educate 13% of Suffolk's children, and through chaplains there is an obvious Christian presence in prisons, hospitals and hospices.

First hand experience

A development worker in Kagera

George works for a Diocese of Kagera programme that seeks to help Christians (and non-Christians) realise and unleash their Biblical mandate for the holistic Gospel of Jesus Christ. Following Bible study, discussion and analysis a village sets its own priorities and is encouraged to meet these themselves. "The purpose of this programme is to empower local church congregations and communities to identify and prioritise needs and mobilise their local resources," says George. "It is about transformation of people's lives through the power of the written word of God: spiritually, socially and economically."



George at Murgwanza

Kagera Technical and Christian Training Centre (KTCTC)

"At KTCTC we provide a 6 month foundation course for evangelists," says Darington, Principal at the Centre. "We give them a Biblical overview and prepare them for preaching and leading worship. They are also taught health care, sewing (women) & carpentry (men)." The students are accommodated on site during the course (currently 24 men & 4 women), fees are paid by them or their parishes and they have to support their families at home while they are away.

Parish Evangelism in a Suffolk town

St John's in central Bury St Edmunds is open daily, inviting passers-by to Enter, Rest and Pray. Prayer Board, Visitors' Book and lit candles show that many do. They come to gaze, pray, sit quietly. Visitors from Eastern Europe venerate an icon. The open door and ringing bell brought newly-arrived Kagendo, from Kenya, and husband Kevin, from Mendlesham, over the threshold. First they joined in weekday evening prayer; now they play a full part in church life.

Pastoral care in a Suffolk village

Village people want to belong to the Church – they help paint its fence, spring-clean, care for the churchyard, fundraise. They ask for prayer, and use the candle-stand – not just those who attend services. For our monthly Drop-In, Church becomes a welcoming Café with refreshments and a Fair Trade stall. Conversations abound with people aged a few weeks to 95 years. It opens doors so lives can be touched with the Light and Love of Christ.



Lay Elder ministry

Serving a local community

Living Water, a shop owned by the local church, is a place of hope, peace and practical help. People drop in for coffee, to do laundry, to buy 2nd hand clothes, to chat, pray, sit and think; just for warm radiators or company. Christian music plays quietly. We speak of Jesus openly, though not in a pushy way. People seeing the Christian posters or leaflets ask "Is this a church shop?" "Yes", we say, "can we help you?"

Introduction to Evangelism

Evangelism is the sharing of the Good News or Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus commissioned his followers to do this; it is not the job of a particular group of Christians, but part of the basic calling of all Christians, young and old.

We can share the Good News by what we do and by what we

say. It means listening as well as speaking, and seeing where God is already at work, sometimes in unlikely places - finding out what God is doing and joining in.

Jesus ministered directly to people's need to be healed, valued, empowered, or reconciled with their family and neighbours. So the Good News of Jesus should be relevant to the whole of human life, public as well as private.

Five Marks of Mission

1. TELL
To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
2. TEACH
To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. TEND
To respond to human need by loving service
4. TRANSFORM
To seek to transform unjust structures in society
5. TREASURE
To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Pastor Focus in the library at KTCTC



For Prayer

O God of all creation who has come to us in Jesus, lead us in your way of love and fill us with your Spirit. Choose us to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to bring sight to the blind and set free the oppressed. So shall your new creation come and your will be done. Amen.

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Come, Holy Spirit, creator, and renew the earth.

Holy Spirit, come upon us.

Come, Holy Spirit, counsellor, and touch our lips that we may proclaim your word.

Holy Spirit, come upon us.

Come, Holy Spirit, breath of God, give life to the dry bones around us, and make us a living people, holy and free.

Holy Spirit, come upon us.

Come, Holy Spirit, wisdom and truth, strengthen us to be bold in faith.

Holy Spirit, come upon us.

New Patterns for Worship

We confess that we have been so busy with mending the nets that we have forgotten to go to fish.

Make us today fishermen so that even if we come back home without fish we will be happy because we have fed a lot of them.

For Christ's sake. Amen.

Diocese of South Western Brazil

May God write a message on your heart, bless and direct you, then send you out, living letters of the Word. Amen.

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Bible resources

The Old Testament tells of a God who reaches out to his creation in love, and works to bring it to that universal harmony and beauty - *shalom* - for which he made it.

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:9

God's People were called to be a blessing for all humanity (Genesis 12:1-3) and to show in their life what God is like. The OT Law and Prophets required Israel to show God's justice, compassion, and love, and to care for his creation. Christians believe that, by God's grace, we share in that calling and responsibility. Jesus shows us what that means for human lives.

Jesus announced 'good news to the poor' in Nazareth's synagogue (Luke 4:16-30). He challenged and comforted people with the good news of God in his words and actions. He restored marginalised people to the community (Luke 7:1-17, 7: 36-50, 8:26-39, 17:11-19, 19:1-10). He told stories about God seeking out and welcoming the lost (Luke 14:12-24, 15:1- 32).

This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.
Luke 15:1

He mixed with people whose lifestyles were feared condemned, or resented (Luke 7:36-50; 8:26-39; 19:1-9).

Teaching, preaching and discussion had their place in early Christian communities. But what struck outsiders was that Christians *lived* their faith.

They made God's all-inclusive love real by creating communities across the usual divisions of culture, race and language (Acts 4:32-37; 10:34-48). Evangelism was about everyday things: with whom you would eat (Galatians), and worship (1 Corinthians); how you spent money (2 Corinthians); organised your household (Colossians, Philemon); related to people whose beliefs differed from yours (Romans).

Sharing the Gospel was not just the task of specially gifted people. Jesus called unlikely people to help him (Luke 6:13-16, 9:1.6). Paul was not an impressive speaker (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Word spread by people talking to family, friends or neighbours, or through chance meetings (John 1:40-44; 4:28-39; Acts 2:5-6; Acts 8:26-40).

Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you. Mark 5:19

Even the Gospels vary in style - some are elegant, some more blunt and prosaic. There is no ONE way of telling the story of Jesus.

Bible study

1. Read Acts 17:16-34, the story of Paul in Athens. How does Paul go about evangelism? How does your Church respond to 'Athenians' today, ie people who want an intellectual discussion about Christian faith?

2. What aspects of Jesus's life-style caused surprise or offence? How are these characteristic of Jesus' followers today, (a) in Kagera, and (b) in Suffolk?

3. Isaiah 11:1-9; Revelation 22 picture salvation as the renewal of the whole world, not just humanity. How can we live this Good News, locally or further afield?

4. Read Luke 7:1-17, 7: 36-50, 8:26-39, 17:11-19. Which people were on the edge of the community then? Which people are on the edge now,

(a) in Suffolk, and (b) in Kagera? What is our responsibility towards them?



Sunday in Ngara

"The gospel was not exclusively, or even mainly, spread round the Roman Empire by big-league evangelists like Paul. It was gossiped by a myriad ordinary Christian people travelling around on their daily business."

Bob Jackson, Hope for the Church

Discussion

1. What Good News about God do you want to share? Put this into a sentence. Share your sentences (if you are in a group) and discuss the similarities and differences.
2. What factors make it difficult for people to hear the Gospel, (a) in Kagera, and (b) in Suffolk? How can we help them to do so?
3. Look at a local newspaper. Where is God at work in your community? Do you see God working through people who do not come to church, as well as those who do?
4. Reflect on the ways Christians in Kagera share the Gospel. What can we learn from them?

Every church we visited was actively being enlarged to accomodate church growth.
Hugh and Jay Williamson. Report on visit to Kagera, September 2006

Action

1. Jesus ministered to people's real needs. How much do you know about the needs of people in your neighbourhood? You may need to do some research. For helpful statistics, see Suffolk Observatory www.suffolkobservatory.info
2. In addition to prayer support, what practically can you do to help Christians in Kagera share the Good News of Jesus Christ?
3. Look at the Five Marks of Mission, used by Christians across the world. Think of ways they could get into the lifeblood of your local church. Away-day for PCC? Sermon series? Action-groups for each Mark of Mission? Display area in church? Magazine articles?
4. Consider ways you can join with other Christian denominations or other agencies working for the well-being of people in your community.
5. Take a look at your churchyard, notice-board, porch. Do they 'say' Good News to people who don't come into the building? If not, decide how to improve them.



Training day for evangelists at Mabawe

This leaflet was produced on behalf of the World Mission Group of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich with input from the Diocese of Kagera. For further copies of this leaflet and others in the series or for more information please contact Sue Young, World Development Adviser on sueyoung@fish.co.uk 01473 233525 or Elizabeth Moore, Lay Education & Training Adviser on Elizabeth@stedmundsbury.anglican.org 01359 233050. We can arrange for someone to visit your church or community to talk about Kagera and evangelism or to lead a discussion. Bible quotations taken from New International Version. January 2007