

Mission 3 Report

The Provincial Youth Gathering 2016 set out to address the importance of the Marks of Mission in Anglicanism as a means to give insight on its theme “Living the Faith”. The five Marks of Mission are as follows:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need through loving care and service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

During the breakout group session, each group was given a Mark of Mission to discuss. The third Mark of Mission was led by Reverend Earl Hepburn of Bahamas. Mark of Mission 3 deals with the ability to respond to human need through loving care and service. Human needs are necessities which speak to survival and functionality of people in a society.

Responding to human need means addressing, as Christians, and more specifically Anglicans, the extent to which we give of our love and service. This Mark of Mission challenges us to give of ourselves selflessly, as Jesus did. Our service to our fellow humans should pattern the life of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Jesus said the second most important commandment is to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. This reiterates that whatever service we give to our neighbours selflessly must also be done in love.

In learning about this Mark of Mission, Rev. Hepburn established a biblical framework for this journey; he used the human hands to explain. The thumb, being the strongest recognised as the Bible, the index finger, being the direction, as psychology, the middle finger – the tallest as world, the ring finger – the weakest as the Church and the pinkie finger – the smallest as oneself.

In addressing the thumb – bible, Rev. Hepburn shared with us the needs of individuals. These are: Hunger (John 6: 1-15 & 22-51), Thirst (John 4: 1-42), Forgiveness (John 8), Bondage (Mark 1: 21-28) and Healing. He highlighted that Jesus emphasised these needs throughout the bible and that these needs are not particularly physiological but predominantly spiritual.

The index finger – psychology, aids our understanding of our human condition. Rev. Hepburn communicated that the response to human needs here are highlighted in psychologist, Abraham Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs was the theory used in helping us to understand what motivates people. This five stage

model is divided into basic and psychological needs which ensure survival. This Hierarchy of Needs identifies different levels of needs; but, in order to achieve progression through these levels, each has to be completed.

The purpose of the middle finger – world, was to identify those areas in our world where there is a need. Rev. Hepburn asked each of us to identify what needed to be addressed in our country. Examples of what some people listed were spirituality, poverty, violence, racism, unemployment, colourism, creedism, juvenile delinquency and the list goes on. The discussion went on to underline ways the Anglican Church could be a light in addressing these needs in our respective countries.

That discussion then took us to the ring finger – the Church. Its purpose was to evaluate what we are doing as a church now. We spoke about we as the Church in Province of the West Indies is carrying out this Mark of Mission. Several people gave examples like: evangelizing to others about the Gospel of Christ, taking communion to the sick and shut-ins, collecting dry food items for the poor and families in need. We debated that this Mark of Mission is not limited to the tangible ways we can respond to human need but also extends to things like simply giving of our time or giving a listening ear to those who might need it. Many other tasks have been undertaken within the various parishes across the dioceses in the province and we are encouraged to explore these methods that we might find the most effective way of tending to the needs of God's people

Going on to the last finger – the pinky finger – oneself, which identified as one's personal actions in responding to human need. Reading Acts 3:1-10 we learnt of the important of not satisfying a person's major wants but his/her most significant needs. The scripture highlighted a situation with Peter and an ill man. The man had begged for money but Peter saw that what he really needed was to walk; and so, he commanded in Jesus name that the man get up and walk. While the story pointed out the difference between want and need it is paramount to note the immediate response of faith from the begging man, and then his following thankfulness and Peter's humility. This story, therefore, also teaches us the value of having faith and being thankful when we ourselves are in need and also the value of remaining humble.

In addition to the use of the human hand to explain the different roles for the Mark of Mission – Bible, Psychology, the world, the church and oneself – the family plays an important role in sustaining human needs. Family is the building block of society and its purpose is to teach you about God, give moral values and guide you through life.

After learning about all these things, we prepared to take theory into practise. On our journey to thoroughly internalising Mark of Mission 3, our first stop was visiting a geriatric home. The aim of this visit was to give of our time, company and patience to the elderly that lived there. This visit touched a few of us deeply, some even to the point

of tears. To know that the simplicity of a visit, a conversation, or even the sharing a bible verse or two gave them the reassurance of being loved was definitely an uplifting moment for everyone present.

Our next stop was a children home; consisting of children who have been neglected and/or abused. Like at the elderly home, we were expected to wholly give of our time, company and patience, even our energy as some even played games with the children. These children were happy to meet us and some even expressed future plans and ambitions. Of course, the moment shared with the children was much different from the moment with the elderly. The children were peppy and seemingly unaffected by whatever circumstances may have been hindering them. It was enlightening to be a part of that.

Overall, the experience was one that gave a different outlook on what it meant to respond to human need through loving care and service. These visits allowed us to see that the human need was more than just supplying tangible items like food, clothing or money. They projected that intangible service like giving of time, company, skills, and love, played possibly a superior role in responding to human needs.

Now that we have learned all these things and put them to work in our mission outreach, the following are suggestions as to how we, the Church in the Province of the West Indies, can achieve the principle of this Mark of Mission as dioceses, parishes, churches and individuals in Christ successfully.

Firstly, we can start by making friends and building strong friendships/relationships. Through these friendships we can accomplish many things such as the following: spreading the word of God, showing love and compassion through kindness, practicing forgiveness, sharing meaningful experiences with each other/ listen to concerns.

Second, we can respond to human needs by youth outreach. As a group of youth, we can engage in Youth group sports day. This will help to bring young people together in a setting of fun and fellowship. This can be a positive regular activity on the churches calendar that will be sure to bind youths together. We can even promote a Youth kitchen: youths with cooking abilities and those youths who know someone that can cook will make meals, package them and go out into the community to deliver meals to those who are not able to provide meals for themselves.

Last, Youth Workshops which we believe are needed in the churches because they can help to curve and correct many of the social ills plaguing the young generation. The workshops can include topics that will address: Teenage pregnancy, Family planning, Anger management, Peer pressure, Self-acceptance, Behavioural problems, Bullying, etc. These workshops will cater to individuals who feel like they are alone and can stimulate networking with others that will help to give comfort. The needs that are going

to be met will be on a deeper level that can help to make persons feel fully aware of themselves.

To conclude, it's safe to say that Mark of Mission 3, led by Reverend Earl Hepburn, was effectively accomplished. All things learned – theory: biblical framework which used the human hands, the role of the family, or practical: visits to both geriatric and children's homes – impacted greatly on the lives of all partakers of this Mark of Mission and it is hoped that everything is taken into perspective and put into action when the opportunity avails itself. The suggestions made to build strong friendships/relationships, start youth outreach, and initiate youth workshops are all intended to promote youth development while responding to their psychological and emotional needs. It is paramount to mention that your response to human need is not limited to tangible items like food, clothing or money but extends to intangible service like giving of time, company, skills, and love.