

Mission and Ministry by an African Anglican Theological Education Network: The Vision and Evolution of ANITEPAM

MARTIN MGENI AND LEON SPENCER*

The African Network of Institutions of Theological Education Preparing Anglicans for Ministry (ANITEPAM) has sought, since its inception in 1993, to strengthen and encourage the ministry of the theological education throughout the continent. It has defined its mission as

creating an awareness within each province of what is occurring in theological education in other Anglican provinces in Africa; establishing links among Anglican and other theological education work in Africa through inter-seminary and inter-faculty exchange, exploring the activities of other ecumenical organizations involved in similar work, and undertaking regular communication; identifying institutions in Africa and in the world-wide church which provide resources for helping African educators to improve their skills for service to Africa; affirming links with theological education structures throughout the world . . . , and mutually supporting and strengthening one another.¹

* The Revd. Martin Mgeni, ANITEPAM's Corresponding Secretary, also serves as lecturer at Leonard Kamungu Theological College in Zomba, Malawi. He previously served as Executive Director of Theological Education by Extension in Malawi and as Provincial Secretary of the Church of the Province of Central Africa.

The Revd. Dr. Leon Spencer, ANITEPAM's Liaison Director for North American and British churches, also serves as Dean of the Diocese of North Carolina's School of Ministry. He previously served as ANITEPAM's first Corresponding Secretary during his years as Dean of Studies at the Diocese of Nairobi's Trinity Bible College, and as Executive Director of the Washington Office on Africa.

¹ ANITEPAM's by-laws, adopted May 20, 1993.

While African theological educators have over the decades identified the need for greater dialogue and support of one another's ministries—and indeed have found ways to implement that vision, the varied ecumenical associations of theologians being a case in point—ANITEPAM emerged from a sense among African Anglican theological educators, gathered in Harare in 1991, that these efforts were insufficient. After affirming the importance of “the development of an authentically African Christian theology,” the need of African theological educators to be instrumental in such developments, and the value of a “wider exchange and dialogue among Anglican and ecumenical theological centres in Africa,” the Harare communiqué proceeded to call for “a communication network among seminaries in Africa preparing Anglicans for ministry.”²

The gathering in Zimbabwe, called the Anglican-Episcopal Inter-Seminary Symposium in Africa, emerged from an initiative by the Seminary Consultation on Mission (SCOM) of the Council of Episcopal Seminary Deans in the United States. It was part of a series of consultations between American seminary faculty and their counterparts in other regions of the world, first in Asia and later in South America. SCOM invited the Revd. Leon Spencer to organize an African gathering, and he was joined by the Revd. Chad Gandiya, then head of Gaul House, the Anglican theological college in Zimbabwe, in hosting the August 1991 event. During that meeting, African delegates met separately from their American colleagues for a time and expressed the desire that a network be formed to nurture, support, and sustain theological education for Anglicans on the continent. They also named several of their number to serve as a kind of continuation committee to implement their vision, and these persons—from west, southern, central, east, and francophone Africa—became ANITEPAM's first Governing Council.³

In 1992 the Archbishop of Kenya, the Most Revd. Manassas Kuria, appointed Spencer to the position of Dean of Studies at Trinity Bible College in Nairobi, and the continuation committee of the Harare consultation asked him to help to establish and then to administer the network they had envisioned the previous year. Archbishop Kuria invited ANITEPAM to establish its offices at Trinity Bible College, and

² “The Harare Communiqué,” *The ANITEPAM Bulletin* 1 (September 1993): 3.

³ “ANITEPAM has begun . . .,” *Bulletin*, 1–2.

on his initiative, the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA) endorsed the creation of the new network in October 1992.

The immediate question was what ANITEPAM should and, with limited resources, could do to implement its mission commitments. Its first Council, headed by the Rt. Revd. Benjamin Kwashi, Bishop of Jos (previously Rector of St. Francis of Assisi Theological College in Nigeria), emphasized that ANITEPAM “sought to embrace the immense variety of programmes in Africa” and wanted to advance communication between programs and aid theological educators in experiencing programs throughout the continent.⁴ Further, the Council agreed that ANITEPAM would not claim to define what African Anglican theological institutions should do, nor would it assert what form of theological education was appropriate for Africa (theological education by extension [TEE] vs. residential programs, for example). The organization would not take positions on issues facing the church in Africa or in the Anglican Communion, and it would not claim to speak for African institutions.

A key priority which has continued throughout ANITEPAM’s work has been, simply, to inform. The premise has been that many programs, especially smaller ones in more remote locations, often lacked information about subjects critical to their ministry. The fact that the church in the United States is deluged with information may demote this priority to “a nice thought,” but ANITEPAM’s Council was clear that there was a striking dearth of information about the church and the ministry of theological education in African institutions. ANITEPAM, therefore, immediately began to publish *The ANITEPAM Bulletin*, now entering its fifteenth year; for many years it was the *only* publication designed specifically for and issued by African Anglicans.⁵

The information ANITEPAM’s publications program has sought to convey consists of news about the African church and the Anglican Communion; news about developments in particular African theological institutions; opportunities to strengthen institutions (including access to book donation programs); opportunities for African theological educators (including information about scholarships for further study,

⁴ “ANITEPAM has begun . . .,” *Bulletin*, 1-2.

⁵ Both the *Bulletin* and the *Journal* are posted to every known Anglican institution of theological education in Africa, to every African Anglican bishop, and to a number of interested individuals throughout the world.

conferences, and so on); notations and reviews of new books for libraries; and encouragement to share information in the *Bulletin* and *Journal* with students and faculty.

Joining the *Bulletin* in 1999 was *The ANITEPAM Journal*, an annual issue that has focused on such themes as “The African church toward the new millennium: Challenges for African theological education” (1999); Christian-Muslim relations in Africa (2000); “Understanding T.E.E.: A course outline and handbook for students and tutors” (2001); women in the African church (2002); contextual theology (2003 and again in 2004); “Theological education and God’s mission in Africa” (2005); and “Theological Education and the Anglican Way in Africa” (2006). The 2007 issue of the journal will be released shortly.

If information ranked high among ANITEPAM’s priorities, the network also saw that the print media was not the only means to provide information and to stimulate shared reflection. The Council noted two constituencies within the Anglican Communion and in African Anglicanism that were frequently not “at the table”: namely, French-speaking Anglicans and African women in theological education. ANITEPAM thus sought to provide an opportunity for them to share information with one another about their ministries and to identify their own needs and priorities; both were the first such Anglican efforts.

In 1996 the network joined with *Rencontres*, the international association of Anglicans of French expression, in hosting a consultation of French-speaking Anglican theological educators and church leaders. With the guidance of the Rt. Revd. Isingoma Kahwa, then ANITEPAM’s Council member for Francophone Africa (and then Directeur of the Institut Supérieur Théologique Anglican in Bunia, Zaire, and now Bishop of Katanga), every effort was made to hold the gathering in a French-speaking African nation; but it ultimately became necessary to abandon plans for an eastern Congo venue and turn instead to Limuru, Kenya. Delegates from a dozen nations, principally African but including Canada, France, and Haiti, attended. In particular they called for high quality ministerial formation conducted in French, with appropriate Anglican literature available in French, and with support for French-speaking Anglican theologians to undertake and publish their research.⁶

⁶ *The ANITEPAM Bulletin* 10 (April 1996): 3, 10. The full communiqué, issued in French, appears on pages 8–10.

In 1998, ANITEPAM returned to Zimbabwe to host a similar gathering, this time for and led by African women in African theological education. Delegates from throughout the continent attended the consultation, “Nurturing Our Calling . . . Strengthening Our Ministry,” organized by the Revd. Mabel Katahweire of Uganda. (Katahweire taught both at Bishop Tucker Theological College and in TEE in the Church of Uganda, and she served on ANITEPAM’s Council for a number of years.) The group called for “a review of the traditional theological curricula in Africa; the inclusion of women’s studies programmes; greater emphasis on lay training . . . ; expanded opportunities for women educators to write and publish; and broadened representation of women on theological education boards and commissions.”⁷

ANITEPAM continued this practice of providing a forum for discourse and action by hosting the second global consultation of Anglican contextual theologians in Durban, South Africa, in August 2004. The first had been held at the Episcopal Divinity School in 2003, with the intent “to establish a voluntary network of Anglican Contextual Theologians,” thus providing a forum “for multiple theological voices within Anglicanism to be heard and acknowledged,” leading to further resources for theological education and leadership formation.⁸ As the Revd. Mike McCoy, a South African missiologist and ANITEPAM’s third Corresponding Secretary,⁹ wrote, “ANITEPAM serves the theological education community in Africa. So ‘doing theology in context’ lies at the heart of our endeavours.”¹⁰ To emphasize context, ANITEPAM arranged for the 2004 delegates to travel from Durban into the fresh air of the Valley of a Thousand Hills, and then to return to the pollution of Durban’s industrial basin; the trip was organized by the Diakonia Council of Churches. They were then asked to consider four questions: What do I see and hear? What do I feel about this? What connects with my home context? Where and how is God at work?¹¹

⁷ *The ANITEPAM Bulletin* 17 (January 1998): 1.

⁸ “Communiqué from a consultation of Anglican contextual theologians,” *The ANITEPAM Journal* 40 (November 2005): 19.

⁹ McCoy was also a staff member of the Theological Education by Extension College Southern Africa, serving as course advisor in practical theology, where he wrote a core course called “Doing ministry for a change.”

¹⁰ Editorial, *The ANITEPAM Journal* 44 (November 2004): 1.

¹¹ “The ACTs 2 e-diary,” *The ANITEPAM Bulletin* 43 (August 2004): 3.

What comes from these consultations is open to debate. An abiding issue for international church conferences and consultations, especially where travel is expensive, as in Africa, is the long-term influence of those gatherings. ANITEPAM has seen its role as one of facilitation, providing opportunities for the sharing of information and for experiencing the richness of the African church, the Anglican Communion, and the church universal, with the hope that at the least individual experiences will influence and strengthen teaching in participants' home institutions. In the cases above, the Francophone event stimulated a network that continues to function. The women's consultation led to further work on educational materials for theological institutions in Africa. The Anglican Contextual Theologians consultation highlighted the value of continued dialogue, but a way forward has yet to be identified.

Information is fine; experience may be even better. The consultations provided both information and experience of the broader church. So did an initiative ANITEPAM began in 1997: faculty exchange. The premise was that those African theological educators who had experience outside of their own nations were often far more likely to have been in North America or Britain than in another African country. Yet the richness of the African church indicated clearly to Council members that African educators would benefit from experiences at theological institutions elsewhere on the continent. A pilot program began between Bishop Tucker Theological College (now Uganda Christian University) and the College of the Transfiguration in South Africa. That was followed by an exchange between St. Nicholas Theological College in Cape Coast, Ghana, and Gaul House in Zimbabwe. Efforts were made to translate this initiative into crisis circumstances, where theological educators from around the continent would stand in solidarity with their colleagues in difficult circumstances such as in the Sudan. But these plans were ultimately unrealized. In a related matter, however, ANITEPAM did send a deputation to Rwanda, in response to an invitation from the church there, to advise about theological education in a post-genocide Rwanda in 1998.¹²

We noted above that ANITEPAM does not take positions on issues facing the church in Africa or the Anglican Communion. In its

¹² "Le Rapport de la Delegation sur l'Education Theologique pour la Province de l'Eglise Episcopal du Rwanda," February 1998.

submission in response to the Windsor Report, ANITEPAM noted that it

exists to serve the whole African Anglican theological education community in all its diversity. This diversity is found in the membership of ANITEPAM's Governing Council. So we do not promote particular causes or positions: rather, we seek to encourage African Anglican educators and learners to reflect on the issues that face us and sometimes divide us, bringing to these issues the rich array of resources—biblical, historical, contextual, cultural, ecumenical, personal, and so on—that are available to us.¹³

That has been ANITEPAM's thrust throughout. It has taken positions with regard to the ministry of theological education as broadly envisioned, and has sought to encourage reflection and discussion about a variety of theological and ecclesiological issues in African theological institutions without taking specific positions on those issues itself. The *Journal* in particular includes questions for study and reflection for theological faculty and students. And in its submission to the Anglican Communion regarding the Windsor Report, ANITEPAM repeatedly urged its constituency to engage in study and discussion on the issues raised in the document. It noted that “the Windsor Report's reflections on Communion and interdependence, and on the ways in which some basic principles of Anglicanism have not been observed by various parties in the current crisis, suggest to us that our institutions of theological education need to give urgent attention to their programmes of education and formation in Anglican history, theology, and polity—a point that ANITEPAM has made before, and has sought to address through facilitating grants of books on Anglicanism to African seminary libraries.”¹⁴

Under the leadership of Canon Gandiya as chairperson of the Council, ANITEPAM adopted a “policy statement on the ministry of theological education in Africa” in 1996. Here it was indeed taking positions, but the statement simply addressed ANITEPAM's concern to strengthen ministry in Africa. The statement affirmed that theological

¹³ “The Windsor Report: ANITEPAM responds,” *The ANITEPAM Bulletin* 45 (February 2005): 1, 3.

¹⁴ “The Windsor Report,” *Bulletin* 45: 3.

education was “an ongoing process,” a lifelong endeavor, and upheld an ecumenical vision. The statement named as critical a discovery of “our African heritage in the full life of the Church,” and called for an openness to “differing models and methods of education and training.” It sought adequate support from within Africa. And it acknowledged that “bishops have a leadership role in theological education but [the Council] believe that this leadership should always be exercised with others concerned in education and training.”¹⁵

Two points in that statement deserve emphasis. First is its openness to differing methods in theological education. That was the key point in ANITEPAM’s work in seeking to further the understanding within residential institutions of the place of TEE in Africa. It was clear that there was some real tension between the two, and ANITEPAM set out to publish a study guide for use in residential institutions to “conscientise and educate residential theological students to the principles, theories and practice of distance education and TEE.” The Council felt that TEE was “a creative, relevant, contextually-appropriate programme of theological education for Africa,” yet it was “merely tolerated by some for the simple reason that what they see as ‘true’ theological education is unaffordable.” Paradoxically, the Council had noted that “TEE is sufficiently widespread that almost all graduates of residential theological colleges will sooner or later . . . find themselves involved in TEE.” It seemed incumbent upon ANITEPAM to assist in deepening the understanding of TEE by students in residential programs, not to promote one means toward ordained and lay training over another, but to advance a sensitivity on the part of each toward the gifts to the church of the other.¹⁶

The second point in the policy statement had to do with the dynamics of the relationship between bishops and theological educators in Africa. ANITEPAM sought to address this obviously critical component of theological education by making presentations to the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa’s New Bishops’ Training Course. In 2001 representatives of ANITEPAM offered workshops in Mukono,

¹⁵ “Policy Statement . . .,” *The ANITEPAM Bulletin* 10 (April 1996): 6. The statement used a similar document from the Church of the Province of Southern Africa as foundational for its own considerations.

¹⁶ “Understanding TEE: A Course Outline and Handbook for Students and Tutors in Residential Theological Institutions in Africa,” *The ANITEPAM Journal* 32 (November 2001): 1–2.

Uganda, for new bishops on such themes as partnership between bishops and educators, and challenges facing theological education in Africa.¹⁷

In recent years that sense of partnership has extended to the Theological Education for the Anglican Communion (TEAC) working group. ANITEPAM shared in sessions with TEAC when they met in Johannesburg in January 2006. Partnership has also been expressed through the engagement of Council members in other Communion endeavors. Dr. Esther Mombi (Academic Dean at St. Paul's United Theological College in Kenya), for example, served on the Lambeth Commission on Communion; the Very Revd. Victor Atta-Baffoe (Dean of St. Nicholas Theological College in Cape Coast, Ghana) on the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission; and the Revd. Fareth Sendegeya (then lecturer at St. Mark's Theological College in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and ANITEPAM's Corresponding Secretary from 1998 to 2003) on the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism. It has also sought a partnership with its financial supporters over the years, including the Anglican Church of Canada, Church Missions Society, the Episcopal Church in the US, SPCK, St. Augustine's Foundation, Trinity Grants Program at Trinity Church Wall Street, USPG, and others.

A final word about the structure of ANITEPAM. Currently under the leadership of Victor Atta-Baffoe, its Council consists of representatives from western, central, eastern, southern, and Francophone Africa, along with an at-large position. It is self-perpetuating and chooses its own members, but seeks the guidance of bishops and theological educators in the various regions. It names its administrator and seeks to hold annual meetings to set policy and direction for the network.

Foundational to its policy and direction remains ANITEPAM's commitment to provide varied opportunities for educators to deepen their understanding of their faith and to broaden their relationships not only within Africa but also within the Anglican Communion and the church universal. Foundational too is its understanding of theological education, to provide faculty and students opportunities to enquire, to question, and to discern God's calling.

¹⁷ *The ANITEPAM Bulletin* 30–31 (May–August 2001): 1, 19–20. On the horizon is a proposed consultation between African archbishops and African theological educators.

