

## Anglicans co-launch international faith movement for gender justice

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Photo Credit: Faith Movement for Gender Justice

Envisage a world where women and men, boys and girls are valued equally; where all experience being gendered as gift rather than danger, a source of life and hope rather than disadvantage, oppression or fear. This was the starting point of a March workshop held in London, UK, which saw the launch of an international faith movement for gender justice.

Representatives from the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Alliance joined 45 participants from 15 other Churches, Christian networks and mission and development agencies to look at the theological imperative for gender justice and to begin working towards a shared vision, commitment and action plan for moving forward together.

“The workshop was a constructive reminder that we will travel further in our efforts for gender justice if we travel together”, said the Revd Terrie Robinson, Director for Women in Church and Society at the Anglican Communion Office. “Women and men have become trapped in distorted mythologies around power which erode the status and agency of women, deny men and women the benefits of just gender relations, and get in the way of development, health and well-being.

“Faith leaders, faith institutions and faith-based organisations, working together, can make a strengthened contribution to the scrutiny and dismantling of these harmful mythologies as we seek to proclaim God’s liberating mission in our world,” she continued.

In a communiqué from the workshop, participants emphasised the crucial role that faith can play in ending gender inequality: “Faith leaders are a permanent presence in their communities and can play a key role in shaping people’s values, norms of acceptable behaviour, life roles and aspirations for ‘a good life’ ... Faith-based organisations and all people of faith can draw on the values of faith to influence and change the laws, policies, programmes and relationships that shape and govern the societies in which we all live.”

Building the capacity of faith leaders to tackle gender inequality is one of the Faith Gender Justice Movement's priorities. A series of regional workshops and national consultations with faith leaders are planned over the next two years. These will take place in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southern and East Africa, Northern and West Africa, and Europe. The workshops will provide space for clergy and lay leaders to discuss and understand gender issues and equip them to seek a coordinated approach in their region and to take a lead in acting on gender justice at every level from the household to global.

The Anglican Alliance has welcomed the initiative. "Our Scriptures speak of women and men made together in the image of God, equal in dignity and value", said the Revd Rachel Carnegie, Co-Executive Director of the Anglican Alliance. "We know from inspiring examples from across the Communion that this process of transformation - restoring just gender relationships - requires the leadership of both men and women."

The Faith Gender Justice Movement will gather practical tools and theological resources and build on initiatives already begun around the world.

In Zimbabwe, for example, Anglican bishops were among those who took part in a church leaders' meeting in Nyanga earlier this month to consider gender inequality and gender-based violence in their nation. The participants signed a charter setting out their commitments and drew up personal action plans which included the dissemination of pastoral letters and consultations with women and men with a view to developing gender policies. They also undertook to engage with the new national Gender and Faith Network established by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Padare (a Zimbabwean Men's forum on gender) and Christian Aid.

In June, the Church of Ireland Theological Institute in Dublin hosted a workshop facilitated by Christian Aid which looked at how socially constructed roles for women and men can compound gender inequality and have a negative impact on development.

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*Some Gender Justice resources are already available on the Anglican Communion website.*