

NEW LIFE IN MOZAMBIQUE



A photographic exhibition looking at a country that is being rebuilt following decades of colonial rule, civil war and famine.



Anglicans in
World Mission



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Welcome

I am delighted as chairman of USPG's board of Trustees to introduce this exhibition of photographs which illustrate the work of the Diocese of Niassa.

I first knew of Niassa more than 30 years ago through a priest who had been its archdeacon at the time of the struggle for independence.

Since then both nation and church have had to cope with civil war and natural disaster.

USPG mission companions Bishop Mark van Koevering and the Revd Helen van Koevering and the people of Niassa Diocese are working to build the church, but in a way that empowers people – women as well as men – and helps to build nation as well as community.

Alan Moses
Chairman, USPG Trustees



Storm clouds gather. In 2000 and 2001, widespread flooding affected nearly a quarter of the country's population. The country remains vulnerable to natural disaster.



Fishing in the Rio Lúrio on the road from Pemba to Nampula.



Washday.



Fatima Cachi and her children. Fatima lives in a bare mud house and struggles to feed her four children. Some days her only food is pumpkin leaves. Poverty is still a widespread problem in Mozambique.





USPG mission companion Helen van Koeving (far right) leads a Bible study group in Nampula that also teaches literacy skills.



The men own these scales and run a business providing a weighing service in Monapo.



Sprucing up All Saints Church, in Nacala.



Daily life for rural folk often involves walking long distances, whether to gather water or to visit the market.



Few people own cars in rural Mozambique. A few own bicycles, but you can't cycle everywhere!



Wearing their Sunday best outside Monapo parish church.



USPG mission companion Mark van Koeving meets parishioners. Bishop Mark has worn out shoes walking to reach remote churches in his diocese.



On the way to market.



Child in traditional cloth.



The designs denote a particular ethnic group.

New life in Mozambique

A look at work supported by the Anglican mission agency USPG in the Diocese of Niassa, Mozambique.

Mozambique is a country recovering from violent political turmoil.

The country was involved in a long struggle for independence from Portugal, which was finally achieved in 1975.

Then followed 15 years of civil war, fuelled by groups from Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa that were opposed to Mozambique's independence.

But now there is hope. The country has been at peace since 1992 and there are many signs of new life.

The Anglican Church – with the support of the Anglican mission agency USPG – is playing an important role in the development of the new Mozambique.

In Niassa Diocese, USPG mission companions Mark and Helen van Koevering are supporting a range of pioneering projects.

Since 2003, they have been training church leaders, running a Christian discipleship programme, tackling illiteracy, empowering women and supporting those who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Mark van Koevering, who is the Bishop of Niassa, explained: 'Our theme has been 'new life' – new life in the diocese, new life in the country, new life in our own small communities – and people are expressing that in all sorts of exciting ways.' ►

Church development

Supporting the church by training new leaders and developing culturally-relevant forms of worship have been among the main concerns of the van Koeverings.

Mark said leaders were particularly needed because fighting in the country meant a whole generation had missed out on opportunities to study and develop leadership skills.

The church is attempting to address this issue by running an ambitious programme that will train up to 600 priests and lay preachers (also known as catechists).

The van Koeverings are also looking to find styles of worship and ways of preaching the gospel that are better suited to Mozambican culture.

Mark said: 'There is a real challenge to help the church enculturate itself so that it is expressing a Mozambican spirituality and worship. We're starting to see this happen, through forms of song and dance and a more spontaneous style of worship that might not suit a European church setting, but which fits in here so naturally.' ►

Empowering women

Women's rights are also high on the van Koeverings' agenda.

Life is improving for women in Mozambique. Women now hold positions in government and new legislation has been introduced to protect women, such as a law that puts up the minimum age of marriage from 14 to 18 and a law that gives women a share of property in divorce cases. The church is also helping to give women a stronger voice.

USPG mission companion the Revd Helen van Koevering is the only woman Anglican priest in the country. This pioneering role is in itself proving to be an inspiration to women in the church.

Part of Helen's work with women has involved implementing an innovative approach to Bible study, which doubles as literacy training in a region where it is estimated that 65 per cent of women are illiterate.

Helen explained: 'Bible study groups re-read the same verse several times, which helps those who can't read or don't have a Bible. The repetition is also helpful in a group in which there are many different languages. The group then shares what they understand.'

The groups teach Christian discipleship and literacy skills, which encourage women's empowerment.

Rebecca Jaquissone, a member of All Saints Church in Nacala, said: 'Things have got better for women. When I think of our parents, things were different because the woman was not supposed to say anything. But now things are changing. In church we can talk, and in our own homes we can communicate better with our husbands.'

But Helen and Mark agree that more could be done to provide women with a voice.

Mark recalled: 'We recently held a meeting for all clergy and church wardens in the diocese. There were about 60 people present, but not a single woman. So we made a decision, as a diocese, that all our decision-making bodies – from diocesan to congregational level – will involve an equal representation of gender from now on.' ►

A holistic gospel

Bishop Mark added: ‘In our teaching, we are keen to connect with all aspects of life. The Christian faith needs to talk about development and justice issues, as well as evangelism and the gospel. We are promoting a holistic view of the Christian faith, which is particularly important in a country where poverty is such a major concern for many people.’

Despite the many challenges facing Mozambique, Mark remains hopeful for the future.

He said: ‘This is an exciting time in Mozambique. The nation is growing quickly, and we pray that the country will continue to develop.’ ■

Pray for Mozambique’s future

- > Pray that peace will continue in Mozambique.
- > Pray for development of democracy in Mozambique.
- > Pray for the hungry and vulnerable in Mozambique, that they will have enough to eat and opportunities for education and work that will help to break the cycle of poverty.
- > Pray the development of the country’s infrastructure, so that all may be able to access basic health care and education.
- > Pray that women will continue to find new opportunities for leadership roles and that their voices will be heard by both the church and the government.
- > Pray that the gospel message of Jesus Christ will continue to create new life in Mozambique.
- > Pray for wisdom, compassion and strength for Mark and Helen van Koevering as they continue their ministry.

'This is an exciting time in Mozambique. The nation is growing quickly, and we pray that the country will continue to develop.'

Mark van Koevering, USPG mission companion and Bishop of Niassa



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