

## Envisioning Sudanese church leaders for integral mission

Bishop Allison Theological College (BATC) trains pastors of the Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS). BATC wanted to facilitate the local church to engage in integral mission through organising a conference for current students, alumni, ECS leadership and staff at the college.

The content of the conference included Bible studies to deepen understanding of integral mission and training in facilitation skills. Participants were expected to share and listen to one another and to God, with the aim of bringing common understanding of integral mission. Some sessions included short talks from the facilitators to introduce or summarise themes, but much of the conference was participatory. Role play was used to enable understanding of difficult concepts, and there were many practical sessions where participants could practise facilitation skills.

A key realisation among the pastors by the end of the conference was that their role in integral mission could be as facilitator and not as implementer. They therefore considered ways to envision church members to become implementers of integral mission. These included training Bible study leaders in how to conduct Bible studies and use the Bible studies used at the conference, and to preach about integral mission in sermons.

The bishops who were present at the conference each took a short session during the week to encourage the participants to take the concept of integral mission seriously. This showed that the bishops were fully committed to creating an environment for the church to engage in integral mission.

At the end of the conference a BATC Alumni Association was set up, with the aim of strengthening the role of the pastors as they carry out integral mission in their local churches.

As a result of the conference, a number of participants said their attitude had changed:

'I always thought my job as a pastor is to help the needy spiritually. Now I clearly see that there is no distinction between spiritual and social – I have to engage in both as one thing', said one pastor.

'I see the mistakes we have always made – we have waited for the outside to come and help us. This is a great danger, and I am committed to fight it, beginning at the church where I am minister', said another pastor.

'This conference has taught me that we need to think as community and not to just focus on ourselves as individuals. Unity is strength. I will do all I can to unite people. As we do God's work we will face difficulties, but to bring about change requires courage and sacrificial living', said one bishop.

'I have come to realise how necessary it is to involve people to make decisions instead of deciding it for them', said another bishop.

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Information provided by BATC