

Notes from the Alongside Hope Tri-Diocesan Parish Rep Conference – May 22 – 24, 2026

On the evening of May 22, nineteen parish reps and interested persons gathered at the Star of the North Retreat Centre in St. Albert, Alberta. Eight reps from the Diocese of Calgary, five from the Diocese of Edmonton and five from the Diocese of Athabasca, along with the communications director from Alongside Hope at the National office in Toronto attended.

It began with supper, and icebreakers which helped people get to know one another.

On Saturday, May 23, several presentations were held.

Zimbabwe Presentation from three organizers in Land, Livestock and Agriculture Management and Food Security, discussed several projects happening locally, with a power point shared via Zoom.

The TSURO Trust allows for sustainable use of resources by utilizing village groups. In Manacaland Province, areas face climate challenges, from cyclones to drought. Alongside Hope provided support after Cyclone Idai in 2024.

Nature-Positive Food Systems Project: Seven villages in the Nemaionde landscape project allowed residents to obtain resilient livelihoods and landscape governance in the form of gabions (stones and mesh to form protection for a wetland) and trenching. Alongside Hope worked with locals to drill wells for clean water, and a 15 km pipeline was built to bring water to this area.

Livestock: Animals used to restore worn-out fields. This in turn promotes animal health. Alongside Hope provided funding to drill boreholes to access clean water.

Nature-Based Livelihoods: Projects such as growing mushrooms, beekeeping, briquette-making for household ovens instead of using firewood, fish farms, sunflower oil pressing. Women are brought into decision-making roles. Community discussion groups called Peace and Healing Friends promote understanding and reduce violence.

Expansion: Assist farmers with their efforts, help them to market their products, train them in marketing. Exploring more soil and water management techniques.

Kenya Presentation by Lois Reid. Alongside Hope is uniquely Canadian and Anglican. There is strength in partnerships. AH has a five-star rating from Charity Intelligence. Donations of funds get where they are needed, where the support makes a difference. There is a 17% administration cut, unlike other charities which have 30% or even 70%. Partners Alongside Hope works with include UDO (Utoni Development Organization), ASDE (Anglican Development Service Eastern), ECLOF, and CWS (Church World Services). These partners are on the ground, identifying the need in villages.

The response from the people Lois met in Kenya was gratitude.

In Makveni County, the youth are leaving villages to move to cities, where they encounter gangs, violence, crime and prostitution. By giving youth projects in their own villages – such as poultry production – they become engaged and take pride in their work. In the village, there is only one

building with electricity – the village saved up \$800 to buy an egg incubator. Goats sent from the AH World of Gifts project are bigger animals, providing meat, milk and a way to make money. AH offers support in humanitarian efforts, agriculture projects and the empowerment of women.

With the UDO, AH supports water capture, prevention of soil erosion, and shallow wells using solar power. Their work with CWS helps with climate resilience and adaptation, food security and nutrition, global migration and resettlement.

In Marsabit County villages, the way of life is still ancient and traditional. Support from AH allows delivery of water and grain, establishment of kitchen gardens, bringing in Gala goats, and beadwork sales (education and training).

The Partners Gathering in 2025 in Toronto was a chance to meet and exchange ideas to avoid repetition of efforts.

The Resilience Fund - \$250,000 is the target, with a matching donor.

Let There Be Light – solar suitcases used for delivering babies in homes with no electricity. These are now also being used in Gaza.

What can we do: Pray – Be Informed – Donate – Pray

Fundraising Presentation by Rev. Terry Francis.

Why do we donate? He shared the story of years of drought in the Kalihari Desert, with its economic struggles and death, and his experience with one year of drought.

How do we donate? Share information and stories. Pray for the organization and its projects. Through the World of Gifts: livestock, water wells. Get the Sunday School involved. Use website information. Have a dedicated Alongside Hope Sunday Service (there are resources available). Increased givings to the AH seems to build church givings, as well.

Ideas Shared at tables:

- Inform others through newsletters
- Soup and Bread lunches
- Sunday School collection towards World of Gift items
- Give a donation instead of a gift for birthdays/Christmas
- Get others involved. Start a parish committee.
- “Small Change for Big Change” jar
- \$0.50 for 50 Weeks – jar at coffee hour
- Share stories – there is power in information. What story will trigger someone to donate?
- Connect with other parish groups.
- Keep AH in front of people; send out reminders frequently.

The AH Website by Kim Umbach, Volunteer Coordinator.

The Volunteer Orientation is a YouTube video found on the website (icon on Home page).

Website items:

- Tag line: “Anglicans and Partners Working for Change in Canada and Around the World”
- Newsletter – “Connect” sent out each month, focussing on different partners’ stories
- “Light for St. Luke’s” – St. Luke’s Hospital in the West Bank. The goal is 407 solar panels for the hospital to provide electricity and improve health care. Hoping to raise \$352,000 (half from an anonymous donor).
- Indigenous Partners – Grants are available for Indigenous community groups
- Humanitarian Efforts – provide help outside of government aid and insurance. There are still costs sometimes two years after a disaster. Past aid went to Fort McMurray, the 2013 Calgary Flood, Litton, BC, Hurricane Fiona on the east coast.

Get Involved – resources are available to order; there are webinars to take part in and learn how to be more proactive.

Water Overseas Presentation by Jeffrey Hanger.

Water is God’s gift.

AH works with projects providing clean water in many areas of the world.

WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

TEK – Traditional Ecology Knowledge.

The Saturday afternoon sessions had a break, with Lois leading a Wheel of Fortune game. On the Saturday evening, Lois then led the singing of songs and hymns in a beautiful outdoor gazebo.

On Sunday morning, Rev. Terry led a Pentecost Eucharist service. The parish of St. Andrew Anglican Church in Camrose notified the reps of their “Rock-a-thon” project – keep a rocking chair going for three hours and collect funds through sponsorship. Donna challenged the other reps to join this event with their parishes.

After a time of final thoughts and sharing contact information, we went our separate ways with a renewed enthusiasm, knowledge of this worthwhile charity, and hope for the work and support of Alongside Hope. This was an essential time of meeting, building relationships and connections and offering support to often isolated efforts.