

Salisbury-Sudans Partnership Bulletin January 2023

Dear Salisbury - Sudans Partnership supporter,
Welcome to this Salisbury Sudans Bulletin as we recall a momentous year for our partnership and celebrate 50 years of close association with the Episcopal Churches of Sudan and South Sudan and look forward with hope and prayer for a real and abiding peace and signs of prosperity in both provinces in 2023 and beyond.

Post Lambeth Hospitality

The close coincidence of the 50th anniversary of our partnership link and the decennial Lambeth Conference, when most of the bishops in the Anglican Communion came to Canterbury, gave us the opportunity to host some 50 Sudanese and South Sudanese bishops and their wives in Salisbury and in our parishes across Dorset and Wiltshire. Our gathering in the Cathedral Close on the 8th August was hosted by our bishops Stephen, Karen and Andrew and our Sudans partnership committee and the enthusiasm for all that we share in Christ made for a memorable time as we ended the day in the Cathedral with Choral Evensong. We are hugely grateful to our many supporters for their unstinting and enthusiastic hospitality throughout the ensuing week. Abiding friendships were made and renewed and the flow of emails and Whatsapp messages and calls etc continues unabated. It has reawakened some of our deaneries to establish links with dioceses in the Sudans.

A sad occurrence not long before our gathering in Salisbury was the sudden and untimely death of the Revd Jane Shaw of Heytesbury who coordinated our Deanery Links activities with great zeal, knowledge and kindly enthusiasm and with others, helped organize the visit of our Sudanese and South Sudanese guests. She remains greatly missed by all her many friends.

In the course of planning and executing the visit of the bishops we were always conscious of Covid lurking over our shoulders as a number of bishops were laid low in Canterbury. In the event four of our bishops and their wives were infected whilst they were with us and we had a busy time obtaining PCR tests for them before we could re book their flights home, especially as one archbishop was tested positive on two further occasions. Overall, it was a wonderful example of dedicated enthusiasm and commitment by all concerned and through it all our Salisbury-Sudans partnership has been enhanced, deepened, and indeed blessed.

As we slowly recover from the constraints of the Covid crisis we are looking to modestly increase our support to the Theological Colleges and Church schools in Sudan and South Sudan in 2023 and in a number of other areas.

Our Sudans Medical Link (SML) has recently made a very successful visit to Western Equatoria and with the enthusiasm of new professional medics on our SML committee, they have distributed drugs to the diocesan clinics and have been checking up on the training of clinical assistants and midwives. This vital work builds lasting friendships and whilst the demands of health care across the Sudans

are enormous it is in these small very effective steps of training local clinicians and midwives that self-supporting medical care becomes embedded. More information SML will be available on line.

Peace initiatives

Whilst the day-to-day focus of our partnership remains on education and health all too often our effective support including in development, has been frustrated by ethnic conflict within the Sudans. This makes peace a real priority. The role of the Churches, their bishops, clergy and congregations in overcoming division and animosity has never been more important and needed. We continue to work with a number of the leaders in the Church particularly in South Sudan and in HM's government with the Sudans Unit in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Sudans All Party Group in Parliament. The ability to live in peace is at the heart of every community because without it, civil society is diminished and impoverished and the abundant life that Christians seek becomes an impossible dream.

In Sudan, the recent fourth anniversary of the unseating of President Omar al-Bashir coincided with a deadline for reaching an agreement to form a civilian government after 14 months of military rule. On the 5th December an initial framework agreement was reached with a civilian coalition though this has significantly divided Sudanese political actors delaying the conclusion of talks and extending the military's de-facto rule. Nevertheless, with concessions this is an opportunity to form an inclusive civilian - military government. Meanwhile in the ongoing tragedy that is Darfur continues.

Our own day-to-day peace efforts continue. Local indigenous commitment to peace depends on the commitment of Church leadership on the ground and a prioritising of faith above anything else - a tough challenge in threatened communities. Following discussions at the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury and in Salisbury we have been able to look at the particular needs including the internal province of Northern Bahr el Ghazal which includes the long running conflict in Abyei. Other efforts include Western Equatoria and in Upper Nile. The national peace initiatives in South Sudan sit in the Revitalized-Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) under which general elections should have been held. Alas these have been postponed for a further two years, so democracy is still some way off.

With this mind, at the beginning of February, there is to be a joint visit to Juba in South Sudan of His Holiness Pope Francis and our Archbishop Justin Welby the Archbishop of Canterbury together with the Rt Revd Dr Iain Greenshields the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, representing the Presbyterian Churches. The purpose of their *'Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Peace'* is *'to inspire and call for love, Hope, Peace, justice, Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Unity'*. Over the three days of the pilgrimage meetings will be held with the leaders of the leaders of South Sudan and the diplomatic community and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from across South Sudan including Bentiu, Juba, Maban, Malakal and Bor. Pope Francis, speaking at the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission at the Vatican has said *"I wish to recommend to your prayers an important step. Archbishop Justin and the Moderator of the Church of*

Scotland, two dear brothers, will be my travelling companions when, in a few weeks time, we will at last be able to travel to South Sudan. Ours will be a pilgrimage of peace. Let us pray that it may inspire Christians in South Sudan and everywhere to be promoters of reconciliation, patient weavers of concord, capable of saying 'no' to the perverse and useless spiral of violence and of arms. "May the Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Peace inspire Christians and non-Christians in the Republic of South Sudan to be promoters of peace, reconciliation, forgiveness and cohesion"

Sudans Day

Our Sudans will be held on Saturday the 18th March 2023 at St Francis's Church in Salisbury at 10.00 - 16.00 (Beatrice Road SP1 3PN) Speakers include Bishop Stephen Lake, Bishop of Salisbury, Bishop Andrew Rumsey, Bishop of Ramsbury, Mr Bob Fairweather, the UK's Special Representative to Sudan and South Sudan and Head of the Sudans Unit in the Foreign Office, a representative from the South Sudan Embassy in London; and updates on major progress in our Medical Link; and news about our ongoing Education and Development activities. There is no charge for the day - tea and coffee will be available & please bring a pack lunch with you. It would help if you would register your intention to attend with my colleague Sheila Trist at sudan.secretary@salisbury.anglican.org

Help

Over the past few years our Salisbury - Sudans Committee has been very well served by a number of faithful supporters but alas a number of them have moved on to other things or moved away and we are very much in need of new help. We meet as committee just four times a year usually at Sarum College and there is a lively ongoing interchange of a variety of topics. If you think you would like to help in any way and especially if you have some skills in communications, or be interested in coordinating our Deanery links for example, or you would like to know more about what we do, do let me know.

With all good wishes for a blessed 2023

Ian

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