

Kadugli Newsletter December 2020

Archbishop Ezekiel says, “Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan”

Even before the independence of South Sudan in 2011, Sudan was a predominantly Muslim country. Although there were Christian churches throughout the land, they were chiefly in the South. Then came the referendum, and the south became the independent nation of South Sudan. Most of the Sudanese Christians found themselves in South Sudan. No wonder those who remained in Sudan felt bereft!

Kadugli, just to the north of the new border, has a substantial number of Christians compared with other Sudanese dioceses, but still most people in South Kordofan (the civil province in which Kadugli lies) are Muslim, though there are some who follow traditional religions. Nevertheless, there are large parts of the diocese that lack a church. Despite this, pastoral visits do take place, and the Diocesan Secretary Babuj Simon is also involved there.

One of the difficulties throughout Sudan is the lack of status and regard of women. Society is male dominated to an extent we find shocking, and it gives rise not only to the horrendous practice of FGM, but to higher levels of domestic violence and a generally low view of, and lack of respect for women. Women’s education is regarded as less important than that of men. Also, there are various things that are regarded as too shameful to discuss, such as miscarriage and sexual abuse. The church needs to play its part in teaching that it is wrong to ill-treat or abuse women.

The Mothers’ Union is active in promoting the improvement of the status and respect of women in Sudan. They encourage literacy and numeracy and have started some Bible studies which have opened up areas for discussion, matters that are important to the women. For example, the story of the woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment somehow brought them to the discussion of the taboo topic of miscarriage, and the Old Testament story of Tamar spoke to them of incest, clearly relevant to them. These are unpleasant topics, but women need to be able to discuss them and feel less isolated. Perhaps we could look at developing links between the Mothers’ Union in Bradford Deanery and in Kadugli Diocese.

The economic situation in Sudan is still bad, with very high rates of inflation. The position is not helped by the US-led sanctions on account of the previous regime’s support for Islamic terrorists. The new regime has taken steps to fulfil the requirements to have the sanctions lifted, and an American announcement raised hopes that the sanctions would soon be lifted. So far, however, there has been no action, and the transfer of money to the church in Sudan (including money for Kadugli Diocese) remains difficult.

All this sounds very downbeat. Do not be misled, however; God is still at work! The new government has reinstated Christmas as a public holiday for everyone. Christian schools can now close on Sundays and be open on Saturday, even though nationally the weekend is Friday and Saturday, with Sunday a working day. The country’s apostasy law has been repealed, though the freedom to convert will require a deeper change. The freedom for Christians to share their faith with Muslims is possible - on paper at least, though it is yet to be seen whether that freedom exists yet in practice. Archbishop Ezekiel has pointed out that “Islam is a culture: it will take some time for people to get used to the change in the apostasy law. But perhaps it will be possible in the long run”.

And while pointing to the need for biblical teaching, the Archbishop has also stated that the church in Sudan is spiritually strong. Church buildings are full, despite great difficulty with public transport. People come from great distances, and this is one example that shows their love for the Lord. And Covid-19 has really impelled people to come together, pray, and study the scriptures. Praise God!

And now, with Christmas approaching, here is a picture (apologies for the quality) of worship in Kadugli Cathedral. Those among you with particularly strong imaginations may be able to detect traditional Anglican influences (!).

The Rooted in Jesus Team from Bradford Deanery visited in October 2019 and here you see Christopher Fielden taking part in worship.



Sudan Link Committee (Bradford Deanery)