

Quarterly Bulletin 99

April 2019



Published by the Sudans Committee of
Salisbury Diocese
www.salisbury.anglican.org

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Psalms 133

DEANERY LINKS DAY

Our annual Deanery Links Day will be the morning of Saturday 18th May at Shaftesbury School from 9.15 am: a great opportunity to hear more about what an extraordinary variety of activities are undertaken within deanery links, and perhaps to share practical issues like difficulties in communication, or transferring funds. A flyer is enclosed with emailed copies of the Bulletin. For bookings contact sudan.secretary@salisbury.anglican.org or ring 01963 23726.

SUDANS DAY

This year's Sudans Day will be on 5th October, at Shaftesbury. If you receive your Bulletin by email a poster is enclosed for you to display in your church please.

POLITICAL SITUATION IN BOTH SUDANS

The relatively peaceful removal of President Omar al-Bashir after 30 years as dictator of Sudan was a remarkable achievement of the popular uprising in which the people are demanding a democratically-elected and civilian-led government. However, the challenge facing the people's wishes is that, having been governed for so long by military dictatorial decree, there is little experience of governance among the civilian population. President al-Bashir's rule was ultimately dominated by an alleged genocide in Darfur in the west of Sudan on the borders with the

Central African Republic and Chad, which led to travel and economic sanctions being imposed upon President al-Bashir and other Sudanese leaders. Then there was, and is, a desperately failing economy. This financial decline was attributable in part to the loss of oil revenue following the independence of South Sudan in July 2011. Today there is a real risk and danger of a power vacuum. We hope that the international community and the responsible powers in the Arab world, including particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia, will support a peaceful transition to help establish democratic institutions of government.

The future is uncertain and unpredictable and the role of the Churches is important. Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo is very much aware of the pressures that the Christian churches have been under from the more strict Islamic elements of those in power. Yet there have been signs of greater openness in Khartoum. At the time of the independence of the Episcopal Church of Sudan in 2017 and Archbishop Ezekiel's enthronement as primate of the ECS, the Christian Churches were welcomed and hosted with generosity and goodwill, and we pray that toleration and inclusiveness will be sustained and be the watchword of the transitional and eventually new government of Sudan.

In South Sudan, the hosting by Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury of President Salva Kiir and Vice President elect Riek Machar was a major symbol of reconciliation of the leaders of the principal combatants in six years of ethnic and tribal conflict in South Sudan. Salva Kiir's Dinka people and Riek Machar's Nuer tribe have agreed to form a transitional government which we hope will lead to an abiding peace and real prosperity for the impoverished people of South Sudan. The role of the Churches has been crucial and the action of the Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Communion in supporting justice and peace initiatives is bearing fruit. However cautious optimism is needed as the track record of the Vice President is not ideal, having changed sides on a number of occasions in the past. The Salisbury Partnership will continue to support Archbishop Justin Badi, Primate of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, in his reconciling and healing ministry through the Justice and Peace initiatives. We continue our daily prayers for Sudan and South Sudan, and the Sudans Chapel in our Cathedral in Salisbury provides a quiet haven for prayer, reflection and hope.

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE 2020

The approximately 10-yearly Lambeth Conference is one of the four 'instruments' of the Anglican Communion, along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council. Next year the Lambeth Conference is being held at the University of Kent in Canterbury from July to August. Before that each Church of England diocese invites bishops and their spouses from their partner diocese elsewhere in the Anglican Communion to spend a few days of hospitality and prayer and fellowship with them. Usually the partnership is a diocese to diocese link, but Salisbury is unusual - though not unique - in that our link is with two independent provinces – the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS) and the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS). The ECS centred on Khartoum has 6 dioceses and bishops, whilst the ECSS headquartered in Juba has 8 internal provinces and approximately 51 dioceses comprising more than 60 bishops.

This means that we could be hosting up to 70 bishops plus their spouses. The 'pre-Lambeth' hospitality will run from Thursday 16th July to Wednesday 22nd July 2020. We plan to hold a gathering service of worship and hospitality in the Cathedral on Saturday 18th July and there may be a meeting of the bishops at some point in the six days and nights that they are with us. We need to find hosts for the bishops and their spouses from our diocese in Dorset and Wiltshire. We recognize that this could be a 'big ask' for some of the smaller parishes but we are hopeful that that we can meet the hospitality challenge. Through the Deanery Links element of our Partnership some 14 of our Deaneries already have lively links with some of the dioceses in the ECS and ECSS. We have created a Lambeth Hospitality Committee, chaired by Bishop Andrew of Ramsbury. We will seek and coordinate hosts and hosting programmes and nearer the time we will provide guidelines on hosting, food tastes and the Sudan way of life to help hosts support their guests and our link. So, we are seeking hosts who would be willing to help. You can register your initial interest with Sheila Trist, secretary to our Sudans Partnership on tristravensdale@gmail.com

We would like indications of interest in being a host ideally by 16 July 2019. It would be very helpful if you could contact Sheila by that date. Thank you.

We will regularly publish updates on the plans for Lambeth Hospitality so do keep a lookout for further information.

EPISCOPAL UNIVERSITY – A REPORT FROM RON HART

I have just returned from Juba, where I attended two conferences, and then the validation service of the new Episcopal University. A number of South Sudan's Archbishops attended, along with principals of five colleges, academics, and a high court judge. The proceedings were chaired by the Primate, Archbishop Justin Badi. Two of us represented the UK support group (more details on <https://www.ecsssup.org/>). The first 3-day conference was on peace issues, facilitated by Justice Africa. The group considered how the church could support the peace process, locally, nationally and internationally, and the ongoing role of the church's Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Committee. There was a memorable speech challenging the church to fight any tribalism in its own ranks.

The second conference looked at the detail of setting up the new University, which is being formed by the Federation of five of the existing theological colleges (with the possibility of others joining later). Governance structures were agreed, and issues of harmonisation of syllabi and fees discussed, along with the issue of quality control and especially the role of the senate in maintaining standards. All these were highly constructive and detailed discussions. The culmination came with the Service of Validation, confirming the existence of the new University. (The letter ratifying this from the Ministry of Higher Education should come any day now). Bishop Gwynne College is now The Episcopal University, with the central structures based there, and the other colleges involved become college campuses. Canon Dr Joseph Bilal will be the new Deputy Vice Chancellor, and we are being asked to help find a Vice Chancellor to serve for three years. It is a tremendous achievement to have reached this point, and I was able to bring our congratulations and assurance of continued support to all those attending the service.

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