

**Visit from Bishop Moses Deng Bol, Bishop of Wau diocese in
the Sudan,
St. Aldhelm's School, July 19th 2010**

Since the end of the Cold War, conflicts in Africa have cost £150 billion pounds, the equivalent of all foreign aid given between 1989 and 2007. Those countries at war – including the Sudan- have 50% more infant deaths than the more stabilized regions of Africa. Economies in war-torn countries have shrunk by 15% and life expectancy has been reduced by five years.

The people of southern Sudan are at present concerned with rebuilding the infrastructure of their region following a long civil war which lasted from 1983 until 2005 and which saw two million lives lost. Thousands of miles of dirt roads have to be cleared of mines and repaired, helping the 2 million internally-displaced people to make a homecoming. Secondary education in the Sudan is barely existent; those with skills to teach in higher education are mostly in exile.

In 2005 a Comprehensive Peace Agreement was implemented, offering the hope of stability between the northern and southern regions of the Sudan. Autonomy was granted to the Southern Sudanese people, and in January 2011 a referendum is scheduled which might lead them to seek independence from the North. But the Khartoum -based government remains determined to exploit oil-rich stretches of Southern Sudan, a region that is still riven by inter-tribal conflict and is under pressure from the continuing humanitarian tragedy in Darfur province.

Christian leaders in southern Sudan have called upon the international community for a measure of protection: a return to war in the Sudan may well involve an escalation which could draw in nine Central African countries.

At present there are threats presented by incursions of the Lord's Resistance Army and other marauders who have crossed the border and who are using armaments supplied by China (which has an interest in the south's oil reserves).

Our visitor, the Right Reverend Bishop Moses Deng Bol, was elected Bishop of Wau Diocese (part of the Episcopal Church in the Sudan) in October 2009. Bishop Moses was enthroned in March 2010 at Good Shepherd Cathedral in Wau. Wau Diocese covers two out of the ten states that form the Southern Sudan. Wau is one of the three disputed areas between the two main parties in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Moses was born in 1976 in Warrap state, Sudan. He spent his childhood in a cattle camp and village where schools were non-existent. Children had no access to formal education and looked after cows. Moses became a Christian after a serious illness.

While receiving medical treatment he met a young evangelist who taught him to read and write the Dinka dialect.

After learning Dinka, he started leading prayers in church, becoming an evangelist in 1994, attending Bible school and being formed for future church leadership.

In 1995, while travelling to Khartoum to seek better treatment, Moses was detained on suspicion of being a member of Sudan People's Liberations Army/Movement. While in detention he was tortured by the Sudan Armed forces. On release he had no money to pay for his transport to Khartoum, so he spent several months working in a sugar factory to fund treatment and transport back to the South. Realizing he could not make enough money to pay for both his treatment and transport, he worked as brick layer to pay for his return to Southern Sudan, where he was ordained priest in 1999.

Over the period of a decade, Moses continued his education in Kenya. He graduated with a degree in Theology in May 2006. Through his experience as a relief worker, Bishop Moses sees Christian ministry in the Sudan as a blend of evangelism and social development. His home territory remains the site of persistent tribal clashes. Promotion of peace is one of the major challenges for Bishop Moses and his colleagues in Wau Diocese.

Bishop Moses has a vision of a Diocese led by well-trained and experienced clergy, Mothers Union members, youth and Sunday school leaders and Church Council leaders.

He believes in a Church that encourages forgiveness, reconciliation and peaceful co-existence among the different tribal groups in Wau and in the wider Sudan.

Moses wants to encourage a Church that fights for justice and human rights, especially the rights of the most vulnerable groups of in society including women and children (particularly orphans and widows).

Bishop Moses believes in a Church that encourages dialogue between Christians and members of other faiths including Islam and the traditional African religions. He wants to see the Church become an advocate of environmental protection and the best use of natural resources for the benefit of the local communities.

Reverend Canon Stephen Batty, July, 2010

