

SUDAN CHURCH REVIEW



Spring 2024

Magazine of the Church Association
for Sudan and South Sudan
supporting the Episcopal Churches of Sudan and South Sudan



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SOUTH SUDAN**

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Tel: 01454 319228 rector@yateparish.org.uk

Revd Pauline Walker pjwalker121@gmail.com

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secretary.casss@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Andrew Persson 1 Hardwick Avenue, Kidlington, OX5 1BH
andrew.m.persson@gmail.com

Sudan Church Review and Website Editors

John & Sue Inglis-Jones 28-30 Main St, Felton. NE65 9PN info@casss.org.uk

www.casss.org.uk

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FRONT COVER PHOTO

Archbishop Ezekiel and others at the formation of the new Diocese of Heiban in Sudan - see article on page 16

Co-Chairs' introduction

Rev Pauline Walker, Co-chair

First let me say a big thank you again to those of you who have been able to contribute towards the Appeal we made for help for Archbishop Ezekiel to distribute to the Church leaders in Sudan to assuage some of the suffering. As you will see from our treasurer John Poole's report the figure has now reached more than £115,000, for which they are extremely grateful, and money is still coming in. We are keeping this open and still very much welcome any more gifts so that we can send them out as we are able.

The situation in Sudan continues to be grim, with no sign of an imminent peace in sight. And South Sudan is facing huge difficulties with outbreaks of conflict, continued displacement of people, increased robberies, lack of supplies and outrageous inflation – especially now that the oil pipe taking the oil from South Sudan through Sudan for export has been broken, cutting off around 90% of South Sudan's income. So in the midst of the horror we continue to pray for God's intervention, and for strength, resources, sustenance and the faith to keep going for the church leaders and the people in both countries. And we continue to do what we can to help.

Thankfully it is still possible to visit some areas, and in the following pages you will see a number of reports from these trips, including from our Trustee Board members John Poole, Tim Flatman and Wendy Fry, as they report on activities in Sudan, Abyei and South Sudan respectively.

It is encouraging to see that at least in parts of South Sudan programmes of outreach, teaching, training and reconciliation are being run and developed by the Church, with Archbishop Justin Badi taking a very active lead in implementing his vision of the Decade of Discipleship throughout all the Dioceses. It is also extremely encouraging to see the progress of the ECSS

continued on page 13

OUR BREAD IS TEARS

An update on Sudan written by John Poole



“There has been fighting for one year now, and it’s still going on. People are still dying. And people are still fleeing Sudan because in many places there is no security. The sad thing is that those who ran to other countries, in many ways are also suffering. Our country’s not safe, but where we run to for safety is no safer. As the suffering continues, I have been thinking is it not better for somebody just to die on their own land?”

Archbishop Ezekiel, speaking to the Sudan Roundtable in April.

The Sudan Roundtable have received a £230,000 survival plan for the Episcopal Church in Sudan this year. Together with Leeds and Salisbury Dioceses, the Anglican Communion Fund and Relay Trust, we have committed to fully fund it. CASSS is contributing £60,000 towards the total which is intended to enable all the bishops to keep functioning, plus enabling 62 church centres in war-torn areas to be active, and provide humanitarian relief to 77 congregations.

The survival plan doesn’t include supporting ministry training, or the Mothers’ Union. We are working on that, seeking to draw out action plans that partners can fund. Leaders from Shokai Theological College are

gathering in Egypt, but Mothers' Union leaders have been widely scattered. The women have a big role in energising the life of church communities in Sudan, usually with very little in the way of resources, and we do not want them unsupported.

Fear of famine as armies fight on

The UN is loudly reporting Sudan is on the brink of famine, with malnutrition and starvation already evident. The main places are probably Omdurman where many Christians live, which is cut off from normal food supplies, and Darfur in western Sudan, where very, very few Christians live. Darfur is likely to hit the headlines first. But the situation is dire across the whole of Sudan with normal planting and harvesting heavily disrupted. We are supporting the ECS as it seeks to provide help.

And still the fighting goes on with no end in sight. The Army has slowly started to fight back, strengthened by Islamist factions, which is a worrying feature. The Paramilitaries are perhaps overextended, but are still killing, still seeking to gain new territory. In the west, in the south and in the east, People's Armies have taken up arms and are holding territory. In the Nuba Mountains, that is the SPLA, who provide some protection to the Nuba people, where bishops Andudu, Hassan and now El-Sir are working, and the church is growing, strengthened by many people escaping from the fighting at Khartoum, Kadugli or El Obeid.

Restore us O Lord!

Two exploratory visits to key ECS sites in old Omdurman have taken place. Video clips show the streets absolutely empty with no vehicles or people moving about. The UN says 3.5 million people have fled Khartoum State, out of an urban population of 6.3m. Khartoum diocesan offices are in disarray, with part of the roof down, but they look repairable, whereas other buildings such as Shokai college and the Church of the Saviour are destroyed.

After the war will be a time for re-assessment, re-thinking how the Diocese of Khartoum is going to function, needing some deep strategic planning to guide reconstruction. No one yet has been able to visit the sites in Khartoum.



In Psalm 80 v 5, the believers lament “You have fed us with the bread of tears, and given us tears to drink in full measure.” But they also cling to hope, pleading “Restore us O lord God of Hosts! Let your face shine on us that we may be saved.”

The Annual General Meeting of The Church Association for Sudan & South Sudan will be held at 12 noon on Saturday 15 June at St Andrew's Church, Short Street, Waterloo London

**ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**

SE1 (off The Cut, near Waterloo station (Northern and Bakerloo tube line) and near Southwark tube station (Jubilee line))

There will be an option to view the meeting via Zoom for those unable to attend in person, but only those attending in person will be able to vote. *(A log-in will be issued to any members who wish to attend upon registering their intention to attend by e-mailing info@casss.org.uk by Wednesday 12 June, 2024)*

In addition to the usual business of an AGM we intend to provide members with updates on the situation in both Sudan and South Sudan in the usual way. The agenda and copies of the annual accounts, annual Trustees' report and 2023 minutes are available on our website.

Providing Hope in Abyei

Tim Flatman, CASSS Trustee

Abyei has been in a continued state of conflict since Twic youth launched attacks on Agok over two years ago. What initially seemed to many to be tribal clashes, have evolved into a full-scale onslaught on Ngok civilians, which many Ngok describe as genocide. People have been burned inside their homes; kidnapped or shot when they go to cultivate, gather grass or fish; tens of thousands have been displaced. Thriving marketplaces and population centres have been reduced to ashes by Twic militias, with the tacit or explicit support of Twic SSPDF who have camped out by Agok airstrip. ECSS Abyei, whose cathedral and base is located in Agok, the worst-affected area, have been present throughout the crisis, caring for those affected.

Bishop Michael Bol Deng, stresses the importance of preaching peace consistently. “The message of the church is always peace not war,” he says. “We don’t blame the whole Twic community for what is happening. We preach against recriminations. Our people need to be prepared to forgive and live in peace with



*Bishop Michael meeting Tim Flatman
in Abyei in February 2024*

our neighbours when peace comes.” At the same time, he says, the church has a responsibility to speak the truth even when it is controversial, to support the victims of conflict and be a voice for the voiceless. This means not pretending that the conflict is even-sided, but admitting that crimes against humanity are being perpetrated by Twic militia against Ngok civilians.

Other churches have made the understandable and reasonable decision to relocate all their personnel to Abyei town, where the vast majority of displaced people have gone. While ensuring that there are clergy in Abyei town to support the people there, Bishop Michael, together with Canon Zachariah Dau, made the decision to remain in Agok together with the thousand or so people who remain there. They were determined to worship and pray with the remnant in Agok, to ensure that the ECSS school (still teaching over 150 students daily) remains functioning, and supervise the completion of projects funded by their partners, including the building of a teacher training centre, library and secondary school classrooms.



Palm Sunday ECSS service in Agok at St Peter's Cathedral

The continued presence of the church in Agok, and especially of Bishop Michael, is a sign demonstrating that the church and bishop believe what they preach: that peace will come, that displaced people will not remain displaced and dependent on food assistance forever, but will be able to return to cultivate their own farms. It has been likened to the prophet Jeremiah's purchase of the potter's field, a sign that the promised land was not to be abandoned forever, but the people would return from exile. It shows that the church does not have baseless optimism, but a firm hope. Their presence has also dissuaded Twic militia from looting or vandalising church premises, whereas the nearby abandoned Catholic Church has been ransacked and defaced.

The church brings hope where the UN, government and international organisations cannot. The church compound provides shelter at night to

around 50 people who do not feel safe in their own homes (a reasonable fear, given that tukuls continue to be burned down regularly at night, probably by Twic SSPDF soldiers deployed at Agok airstrip). Many others come to shelter in the cathedral whenever they hear shooting. The presence of these people brought suspicion and increased risk to the church. The church compound has been raided by Twic militia, who thought they may be harbouring armed Ngok youth, or hiding weapons. They found no evidence, because the church practices what it preaches about peace, and so the reputation of the church was strengthened, even in the eyes of these militia.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has not been distributing food to those who remain in Agok, despite the difficulty in carrying out economic activities, since people venturing outside of their homes have often been targeted. ECSS Abyei has carried out occasional food distributions whenever possible, with support from international partners. Their efforts have attracted praise from the WFP and been a sign of God's kingdom to UN personnel themselves afraid to operate in Agok.

While people come to the ECSS cathedral and compound in search of protection, sustenance and hope, Bp Michael is not content to wait for people to come to him. Outreach efforts have been redoubled, with 40 evangelists going to marketplaces and homes in affected areas like Agok, Abuthok and Awal, to offer the hope and consolation that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can provide. "Many people have been coming back to the Lord," he reports. Ultimately, "the church provides a hope that others cannot because our God is a God of hope."

At the time of writing, there are positive signs, with the SSPDF Chief of Staff having visited Abyei, and Twic soldiers having been ordered to redeploy out of Agok, after 2 years of presence there in contradiction of international agreements. It seems that police will remain, but must be non-Twic. We await to see whether these orders will be implemented. Bishop Michael asks for prayer that they will be, and that the church is able to support the thousands, or tens of thousands of people who will return if and when Twic soldiers leave.

For a copy of Tim's detailed report on his recent visit to Abyei, or information on local projects in Abyei including the Teachers for Abyei programme, email Tim at tflatman@gmail.com.

The primary purpose of my visit was to capacity build for the Episcopal University (TEU) finance department as ECSSSUP trustee and treasurer, and to connect with the ECSS Province office on behalf of CASSS.

Much of my time was spent at TEU working with the finance team ably led by Vicky Alur - pictured bottom right. Writing in detail about my work is challenging due to the confidential nature of it!

Juba was hot, regularly 40°C, lots of expats around though few visible on the streets, more buildings popping up higher and higher, the economy is struggling, and crime is apparently rife. My hosts were reluctant to let me out alone. The South Sudanese Pound is struggling hugely, SSP1,200 to US\$1 at the beginning of February 2024, and SSP2,100 to US\$1 by the end of March (yep that's 75% inflation in 2 months or 450%pa if that pace keeps up). The oil revenue has seemingly ceased, a reported pipe rupture in Khartoum and shipping links from Port Sudan disrupted by the Red Sea attacks are likely to delay reinstatement. It is possible now in Juba to withdraw US dollars from a bank ATM, but probably not so useful for the average South Sudanese without overseas employers.

ECSSSUP (Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan University Project) is a UK charity that works "shoulder to shoulder with TEU to educate leaders for a peaceful and prosperous nation". Dr Eeva John, a founder ten years ago of ECSSSUP, is currently the Vice Chancellor of TEU, and a huge encouragement to them. The construction of an 8km fence to secure the boundary of the Rokon site, 80km north-west of Juba, is currently underway with a nearly US\$1 million funded budget!



The vision for the Rokon site

Funding has also been secured to build a new multi-story educational building on the Juba site (ex Bishop Gwynne site), starting September 2024. Funding for essential staff salaries mid term is also forthcoming. TEU is aware that sustainability is key and has a team of lawyers working on maximising income from properties owned by TEU. Students being able to pay fees to sustain a quality graduate level education is possibly a while off. There are also many funding challenges, not least funding for day to day maintenance and running costs. Also funding is urgently needed to fund higher degrees for teaching staff to enable them to teach quality degrees at an expanding university. Further details of ECSSSUP can be found on their website “ecsssup.org”.



VISIT 15/2/24 -4/3/24



Finance workshop attendees

with Barnabas, Student President, he has put together a business case for a project to use that land to grow food for students. Having fresh fruit and vegetables is important, and 30 of the students have signed up saying they want to help. They are hoping to raise £1,700 for the necessary tools and have set up the "Sinai Farm Initiative" and are raising money via the ECSSSUP 'Just Giving' page.

Whilst I was out there, I also helped in a finance workshop for provincial departments, including TEU. It was run by the new Honorary Treasurer Ade Mary Samuel. Mary is young, female and enthusiastic! She organised and ran the finance workshop and has some ambitious plans for working alongside the various

A particularly poignant comment made at a Juba Cathedral service was that the current acute economic crisis meant that even the middle classes of Juba were struggling to buy adequate food. It would be good to see this addressed at TEU. Augustine, a staff member, owns 10 acres of farmland just outside Juba. Along

provincial finance departments to improve controls and computerise. Very encouraging; it was really good to see an email list for attendees being circulated so that they can support each other and troubleshoot the inevitable challenges.



Mary & Wendy

Wendy



Co-Chairs' introduction

continued from page 3

University as it begins to grow after a number of years of hard work by Archbishop Justin and by Canon Dr. Joseph Bilal, to give birth to it and to bring in a team of “midwives” to help. See Wendy’s encouraging report on pages 10 to 12 of the magazine. There are also activities of reconciliation and forgiveness between different peoples as well as dealing with some of the trauma that many people are living with after what they have already lived through and are still living through.

In Sudan much of the focus has to be on basic survival, with many fleeing to surrounding countries and some moving further afield. And yet even here the ECS has been able to form the new Diocese of Heiban. Rev Ludia Shokai, the daughter of the late Bishop Butrus Tia Shokai, the first Sudanese Bishop of Omdurman, was able to attend the inauguration of the new Diocese, and as I write this we are looking forward to her being our main speaker at the AGM on June 15th.

In the midst of all the darkness, horror and despair it is amazing how the reliance, faith and joy of the people can break through, often shown energetically as they welcome visitors from outside to join with them in various activities. Let us continue to pray for and to support in any ways we can the Churches throughout Sudan and South Sudan as they struggle to bring to their people and their nations God’s peace, power, reconciliation and true fullness of the life he meant us all to have.

May God bless you all,

Pauline



Rooted in Jesus in the Northern Bahr el Ghazal Internal Province, South Sudan

January-February 2024

Extracts from a report by Revd Barry Blackford, Team Leader
As part of an ongoing commitment to bringing Rooted in Jesus to all of the dioceses of the Internal Province, a team from the Mathetes Trust has been holding three conferences in Northern Bahr el Ghazal.

The first was an Introductory conference in the Diocese of Gogrial, hosted by Bishop Abraham Ngor Mangong and held in Kuajok Cathedral from 16th to 19th January. The second was also an Introductory conference in the Area Diocese of Tonj East, hosted by Bishop's Commissary Revd Peter Alue Kok and held in Romic Church from 23rd to 26th January. Finally, there was a hybrid Follow-up conference, with some Introductory elements for new leaders, in the Diocese of Nyamlel, hosted by Bishop Peter Garang Akuei and held in Nyamlel Cathedral from 29th January to 1st February.

The teaching was provided by two visitors from the UK, Revd Barry Blackford and Revd David Wood, working alongside an experienced South Sudanese Rooted in Jesus Coordinator, the Ven Yosefate Datiro Minaye from Nzara, who had been part of a previous team. Revd John Akok Akok from Aweil, joined us in Nyamlel; he is another experienced South Sudanese Rooted in Jesus Coordinator who had been part of a previous team. We had hoped to be joined by another South Sudanese Rooted in Jesus Coordinator for Gogrial and Tonj East but he was unable to join us at the last minute. The final team member was Revd Joseph Uyu, the Internal Province's Adult Discipleship Programme Coordinator.

On the way in from the airport to Kuajok Cathedral, Bishop Abraham had said that the people of Gogrial Diocese were really excited by our visit as it is the first time that somebody from Europe had come to teach and encourage them since the establishment of the Diocese. Nothing quite prepared us for the demonstration of that excitement and the welcome that we were going to receive. We were still nearly about a kilometre from the Cathedral when we saw a procession coming down the road. This was the welcome party led by the most colourful processional cross that any of us had seen. It was not possible to continue in our vehicle and so we walked at the head of the procession for the remainder of the distance to the Cathedral where we were welcomed and spent time in worship.

The enthusiasm of the participants and the vision of the bishops left the team feeling very encouraged that the Rooted in Jesus training was so enthusiastically received and plans were made to implement Rooted in Jesus groups in the parishes. It was reported back to us that the weekend after we left Nyamlel saw the launch of nine new Rooted in Jesus groups.

These three dioceses are all, essentially, missionary dioceses with very little by way of resources but they all have one great resource which more than overcomes any deficit: the people. Their love of God, warmth of heart and generosity towards others was the greatest resource one could ask for.

The welcome in Gogrial Diocese





Left to right - Bishop Saman, Archbishop Ezekiel, Assistant Bishop Hassan, Archbishop Paul Yagusuk, Bishop ELSir

The new Diocese of Heiban – an important development in the story of the church in the Nuba Mountains

Despite the harrowing war in their country, February saw a celebration for the Episcopal Church of Sudan, particularly in the Nuba Mountains region. Bishop ELSir Hassan Kuku was consecrated as the first Bishop of the newly established Diocese of Heiban. The consecration, led by the Most Rev. Ezekiel Kondo, Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan, took place on Sunday, 18 February, 2024.

This came during the visit of Archbishop Ezekiel to the region, which was the first official pastoral visit of the archbishop to the Nuba Mountains region since he became Primate in 2017. Accompanied by Bishop Saman Farjalla, Bishop of Wad Medani and Mama Suria Ramla, Honorary President of the Mothers' Union, the Archbishop visited the Diocese of Kadugli, which includes the area of Heiban, from mid-February to mid-March. The group also included a visit to camps for displaced people in South Sudan and conducted a confirmation service in the camps.

However, the most important event was the inauguration of the new Diocese of Heiban, which became the 6th diocese in the Province, and this also saw the consecration and installation of Bishop ELSir Hassan Kuku, the first Bishop of Heiban.

The occasion was attended by the Archbishop of the Internal Province of Central Equatoria, South Sudan, The Most Revd. Paul Wani Yugusuk, in addition to Revd. Ludia Shokai, daughter of the late Bishop Butrus Tia Shokai, the first Sudanese Bishop of Omdurman, who was representing the Diocese of Leeds.

In conversation after the event with our treasurer, John Poole, Rev'd Ludia commented that there was a worrying famine in Kadugli as a result of the war, as most supplies come from the north of the country. The security situation locally is difficult, with many local factors making things complex.

Speaking about the creation of the new diocese, Ludia said:

“Firstly, the bishops came to Juba to meet the Archbishop of South Sudan and to greet people there. We travelled from there together and when we arrived at Yida, Bishop Andudu & Bishop Hassan came. We travelled to Kurigi (a 5 hour journey) through various small checkpoints which were there as a result of the crisis, and when we arrived there was a big welcome celebration. People had been waiting for hours to greet us. We stayed there in the house owned by Bishop Andudu for 3 days and then travelled to Heiban. Heiban United Theological College is there, a big building with a large compound, where we stayed for 5 days in total, as we also held a retreat there for 2 days.

“Building had been taking place at the church which is now St. Paul’s Cathedral in Heiban Diocese, which was amazing to see despite all the problems. So many people came to the consecration, from all the surrounding villages but also from as far away as Kakuma Refugee Camp (in Northern Kenya) where Archbishop Paul Yugusuk has been working with refugees from the Nuba Mountains. The church was completely full, with many children and young people also outside, singing all the time. It was great! The Mothers’ Union, led by Bishop Andudu’s wife, were serving the people with food and many local leaders spoke of the importance of the church after the ceremony.

“There is sadness, of course, but also happiness.”

This development comes in response to the considerable spiritual and numerical growth within the region. The Episcopal Diocese of Kadugli, covering over 90% of the Nuba Mountains area, has been under the stewardship of Bishop Andudu Adam El Nail for more than two decades, with

Assistant Bishop Hassan James, a local partner of the Church Mission Society, providing support.

The establishment of the Heiban Diocese is a testament to the church's dedication to meeting the spiritual needs of its growing flock despite the ongoing conflict in Sudan. The consecration of Bishop EISir Hassan Kuku is not just a celebration of a new chapter for the Episcopal Church in Sudan but also a reflection of the church's commitment to nurturing faith and ministering to the diverse and dynamic community in the Nuba Mountains, which is an area the size of England. The new diocese encompasses more than six Archdeaconries and numerous parishes, reflecting the ever growing reach of the Gospel in the area.

Thanks are due to all those who contributed to the success of the visit and the creation of the new diocese, especially the Relay Trust who funded the visit, the Christians in the Dioceses of Kadugli and Heiban and the local the government & other leaders in the Nuba Mountains who facilitated the travel process.

As the newly established Diocese of Heiban embarks on its journey, we ask you to join us in prayer for its first bishop, EISir Hassan Kuku, for the growth of the faith in the diocese, for the Episcopal Church in Sudan, and for the end to the violence in the country.



Women's Education Partnership

by Sue Clayton

The Women's Education Partnership (WEP) has been funding education in Sudan and South Sudan since 1999. The purpose is to improve the lives of women with particular focus on those from marginal areas and with limited resources.

In late 1996 Lillian Craig Harris, wife of the then British Ambassador to Sudan, decided to help disadvantaged Sudanese women through university. Because perhaps 90 percent of the women of the Nuba Mountains were illiterate, she chose to focus on them and named the effort in honour of a recently deceased Episcopal Bishop Mubarak Khamis of the Diocese of Obeid. As things developed it merged with another charity 'Together for Sudan'. This expanded the work to include training literacy teachers and setting up 'literacy circles' for women.

In early 2013, the charity was renamed 'Women's Education Partnership' to reflect the independence of South Sudan. Sadly, later that year the civil war meant that while women already sponsored were given continuing support to finish their studies, no new women could be taken on.

In 2021, WEP was approached with a referral from the late Rt Rev. Emmanuel Murye, of the Diocese of Kajo-Keji for a young woman who wanted to study Clinical Medicine and Public Health. It was agreed that WEP would sponsor her. We are pleased to say that she will complete her course later this year (see below).

Recognising the multiple difficulties women in South Sudan can face in entering higher education, it was agreed that WEP would support both tuition and other fees plus uniforms when a course required them, and that each woman would be supplied with a laptop to assist their studies.

At present, WEP is sponsoring 26 women in nine institutions of higher education. They are studying courses across a broad-spectrum



including midwifery; public administration; medical laboratory science; business management; nutrition and dietetics; and clinical medicine.

It was agreed that individual need, not institutional need would be the focus and so a range of institutions (including some outside Juba) are involved. Students are presently aged 22 to 35 and include five married women.

When a woman is offered sponsorship it is for the full duration of her course, provided she completes each year. This is to give stability and not raise anxiety for funding of the next year. Sponsorship comes from donations raised in the UK from individuals.

WEP also supports women's literacy and elementary education for women who missed out earlier in life through KIMU Literacy Programme in Juba.



Gune Christine

Gune Christine, the first student sponsored in 2021 was recently interviewed. Here are a few of her comments:

“My parents were unable to support me into higher education. At the suggestion from the Church, I contacted the Women's Education Partnership. I needed to produce documents and my admission acceptance. Clinical medicine was my chosen course. I selected this because in my home village there are no facilities or health workers.

Community awareness on health is very low. My course finishes later this year and I will then have a year placement at

Juba City Hospital. I chose this hospital because they deal with so many people.

My course has given me confidence. I hope to pursue a career in Public Health, assisting people to know how to care for themselves and their families. I plan to go back to my village. The course has given me confidence and I can stand as a responsible citizen.”

If you would like to know more about the WEP programme, please contact Sue Claydon sueclaydon112@gmail.com



The Episcopal Diocese of Maiwut

The Rooted in Jesus team arrive in Maiwut

The Rooted in Jesus discipleship training is designed to help train Dioceses in discipleship and to strengthen outreach mission. The Episcopal Diocese of Maiwut congregations and community members were filled with joy to receive the Rooted in Jesus team from the UK in February. It was the second time that Bishop Tim and his team had visited Maiwut.

Alison and Roger Morgan from the Mathetes Trust facilitated the conference with the team on the ground being Bishop Tim Wambunya, Rev. Andrew Goodman, Mr. David Ridge and Mr. Nadeem. Half the course participants were clergy, women and youth.

Maiwut and Longechuk counties are in remote areas where people are missed by lots of opportunities. Discipleship and evangelism training are badly needed by church leaders and those who have the responsibilities in the church, to guide them and teach the gospel to the church believers there (Matthew 28: 18-20).

The 2024 conference was attended by 170 group leaders from six archdeaconries and after the conference more than fifty new groups were established in Maiwut and Longechuk counties.

Rev. John Jamuth and his team of coordinators were delighted to see so many leaders participate in the conference as was Bishop Peter of Maiwut Diocese who was pleased to see good numbers of women attending the conference.

Women in South Sudan are particularly suffering because of war, flood, sexual violence and many other issues facing them and they expressed their faith and joy when they received the Rooted in Jesus team in Maiwut with dancing and singing.

Half of the 170 group leaders who participated were women so women are now playing a key role in leading the gospel mission and discipleship outreach in Maiwut. One of the distinctive things about these programmes is that both educated and non-educated women and men are equally able to participate.

The group leaders used books translated to Nuer languages and thanks were expressed to the translation teams. They look forward to the prospect of more translated books in the future.





Women participating in the Rooted in Jesus conference and (below) a group meeting



Chieftains and village leaders were invited to attend the youth peace conference in Maiwut

Thousands of youth and church leaders came together to attend the peace conference





THE ANGLICAN DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMME OF THE ECSS MAKES PROGRESS

First reported in the Sudan Church Review in Spring 2023, the Anglican Discipleship Programme (ADP) continues to be a major part of the ECSS's strategy to create a generation of disciples in South Sudan. The programme makes up one of Archbishop Justin Badi's 5 areas that he sees as vital to the country's renewal as he continues his Decade of Discipleship.

The programme is now live in all 8 internal provinces in the country, as well as in the Diocese of Juba. In total, there are 60 dioceses participating in the programme; in each diocese, there are 2 facilitators who organise groups and lead the weekly sessions. This is overseen in each internal province by a co-ordinator who reports directly to the ECSS Province Mission and Evangelism Team in Juba, which runs the programme.

In addition, in November 2023, the Mission and Evangelism Team travelled to the Kakuma Refugee Camp in northern Kenya, where there are still many hundreds of South Sudanese and those from the Nuba Mountains and rolled out the programme there. Such is the demand there, there are 8 facilitators in the camp and over 250 people meet weekly to study the Abundant Life material.

At the end of March, there were over 5,500 people engaged in the programme across all the regions where it is operating.

The task of evaluating the programme is now well underway, led by Paul Yokoju, ADP M&E Officer. Recently, Paul visited both Eastern Bahr el Ghazal and Central Equatoria internal provinces to look at progress there. There are over 1,000 people participating in the programme in both regions.

Some of the impact stories from people in the programme were wonderful to hear. Victoria Ayen from Burithic Centre (Eastern Bahr el Ghazal) said:

'I lived a terrible life full of deceit and hatred even if I always came to church. I fought my neighbours and always wished everyone respected me and my opinions regardless of what it may be. That gave me no peace of mind because I always fought everything that came my way. So, on joining this class, I learnt about, *'new birth,'* and, *'faith and forgiveness'*.

'Today, I have made peace with my neighbours & husband and above all peace of heart and mind. I now share the Word and everything with people and able to forgive easily. I thank this book for changing my life - Abundant Life. May God continue to bring more books to learn and teach us good characters.'

The programme is also aimed at those leading churches. A church leader from Eastern Bahr el Ghazal said:

"This book is great, as a pastor who had never undergone any education or attended theology school but was ordained 13 years ago. As a pastor, I preached and gave limited sermons to the Christians on Sundays in Moreso. I was very poor in memorizing verses while preaching. I believe many of the congregations hardly understood my sermon but as a pastor they accorded me with the respect even if I always gave less to them."

"However, today I confirm to you that the Abundant Life book has brought great improvement not only to me but all. Pastors today have changed the way of preaching and Christians are able to attest to this. I quote: "God has finally sent his Holy Spirit to our pastors. See how they have changed the way they preach now; well organised sermons with additional verses to their sermons." I love this book. Thank you."

The programme continues to progress, overseen by the team in Juba. In February, all the internal province coordinators came together for a planning meeting, hosted in the ECSS Guesthouse and attended by Archbishop Justin Badi - see picture.



OUR FUNDING IN 2023

John Poole, CASSS Treasurer

Within a week of the outbreak of the current war in Sudan, CASSS received a donation to help with the unfolding refugee crisis. The flow of giving in response to the crisis that the ECS is having to survive has been the outstanding feature of our finances in 2023. Before we even launched a formal appeal, we had received £34,620, and the appeal itself brought in another £80,100. That funded a six-month humanitarian relief plan prepared by ECS Provincial Office in which they channel funding out to all parts of war-torn Sudan.

This funding is not in the figures below, which relate to our general fund from which we give our normal support grants. With funds for restricted purposes, we only check that the purpose fits within our registered charitable purposes and that the church in the Sudans can handle the funded work. In 2023, we also received a £100,000 legacy specifically for ECSS, and we gave bursary grants to two students from Omdurman, and one from Maridi.

Our normal income strengthened slightly last year. Figures that were slightly down were covered by other figures that were up, with the result that the total income shown here is 5% up on last year's.

The only actual fundraising we do now is the sale of mint stamps for postage, and we are grateful for Jill Parry who has kept this up during what has been a particularly difficult year for her. We encourage readers to buy their postage stamps from her. Our profit margin on sales is 18%.

Our grants to ECS and ECSS have again far surpassed our income. This is planned, as we manage our reserves guided by the intention of helping them to become self-supporting. A special grant of £100,000 was given to ECS for an income generation project, with ECSS having been given the same in 2022. With ECSS, we are gratified to see that they now have

SUMMARY OF OUR GENERAL FUND 2023

INCOME

£23,770	From donations
£2,070	Net income from selling stamps
<u>£20,580</u>	Interest and dividends received
£46,420	<i>total normal income</i>
<u>£13,290</u>	Legacies
<u>£59,710</u>	

EXPENDITURE

£163,520	Grants to ECS & ECSS
£9,680	Our magazine & website
<u>£330</u>	Visits to ECSS <i>and</i> Other
<u>£173,530</u>	

steady income streams of their own, giving them independence of action, but are concerned that the war in Sudan is destabilising the South Sudan economy.

For ECS, all plans are smashed by the conflict, and all its income streams destroyed. Providentially our big grant is almost entirely unspent, and can be used by ECS when, please God, there is peace, and reconstruction can commence. The Sudanese Pound has halved in value this year, so holding reserves in hard currency has again proved an invaluable support for the work of the church.

Copies of our full accounts will be available at our AGM on Saturday June 15th, and are available now to view or download on our website cass.org.uk.

DEVELOPING THE FACULTY AT THE BISHOP GWYNNE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

One of the goals of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS) is to develop strong institutions that are capable of making a multi generational impact in the country. Archbishop Justin Badi, leader of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, believes preaching the gospel and making disciples are key to overcoming suffering in his nation:

"...we talk of violence, we talk of wars... a symptom and demonstration of how shallow the gospel is in the hearts and minds of our people. So my priority will actually be in making and teaching disciples.. to reconcile our people, disarm their minds and hearts from all those thoughts and actions of violence, hatred... So we will take it as a priority to preach and teach the gospel to all our people."

We featured the Bishop Gwynne School of Theology (part of the Episcopal University) in our last issue but a recent visit to Juba has allowed us to see the fruition of funding that CASSS extended some years ago to develop the faculty of BGST. Through Anglican International Development, CASSS was able to fund the studies of several former Bishop Gwynne students at George

Whitefield College, Cape Town (GWC) in order to enable them to gain a theology degree. The plan was then for these graduates to return to Juba and join the faculty at BGST.

Pictured below: A lecture to 3rd year theology students on Youthwork, given by Rev. Elias Bonga





Pictured above: Rev. Alex Frazer, Philip Lomoro, Rev. Kasmiro Ofuk & Rev. Elias Bonga

So far, 4 faculty members have passed through this process and are now themselves teaching theology students. CASSS was able to visit these 4 members of faculty in February and hear directly from them about their studies and also their experiences as members of faculty.

Speaking about his experiences of studying at GWC, Rev. Elias said,

“the most important thing was the impact of the training at GWC. It was quite intensive but very good. GWC is a good place for learning and it has impacted me in a positive way academically and that is why I am trying to deliver what I have learned from GWC. Also, GWC is set up in a way that welcomes everyone from every context. I wanted to be a full member of the faculty at BGST because theological education is not well grounded here and so I wanted to come back here to teach the word of God. That is my desire and I want to stay here because I believe that is where God has called me.”

Rev. Kasmiro continued:

“the reason that we were sent there was so that we could come back here and teach here in Juba. The teaching at GWC is intensive and scholarly and we can apply much of what we learned there to our lectures here. The challenge is that the government here is now asking lecturers to be qualified at Masters level, so we will need to study more in order to become recognised as full lecturers and help maintain the accreditation of the University. We are looking forward to the opportunity to continue our studies.

Philip said:

“The emphasis at GWC is more scholarly than pastoral and we appreciate all the knowledge that they have given to us. However, it was tough to be apart from my family; when I left for South Africa, my youngest child was 3 months old. There is no way to help if there are challenges at home, so it was stressful for us all at times. The other students were so helpful at these times. They would come to our rooms and pray for us, and even organise a prayer party! These things helped us to be resilient and not drop out of the course. I feel called to teaching. We could work for other organisations but we were supported by someone with the intention of us becoming teachers here and this is from God.”

The programme is continuing and there are 7 more students at GWC at the current time. One of these, Seme Ludanga is now doing a Master’s degree, having completed a Bachelor degree some years ago. There is a need to encourage female students to do this programme, so that female students at BGST will also be encouraged.

We thank God that a programme that CASSS was able to fund in its early days has borne so much fruit. Thank you to all our supporters for making this possible.



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To the Hon. Treasurer, CASSS:

Mr John Poole, 23 Leylands Lane, Bradford, BD9 5PX

(treasurer@casss.org.uk)

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For contact details for the Provinces and Dioceses for the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS) & the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS) see 'About the churches' on the website.

www.casss.org.uk