

## A Letter to the Diocese from Bishop Nicholas

“It was a blessing for me as the new Bishop to be able to visit the 9<sup>th</sup> Provincial Synod of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan in Juba from 13-16 November. Canon Ian Woodward and Dean June Osborne went with me. June led a study day for the 31 Deans of the Province, the first time they had met as a group.

The Provincial Synod last met 5 years ago. Five people travelled to Juba from each of the 31 dioceses. For the first time there was at least one woman from each diocese.

Resolutions made by the Synod drew attention to continuing conflict in four different areas. The Church is taking a lead in peacemaking. The Synod raised a lot of issues about internal Church business. The Church continues to grow fast but has meagre financial resources and few clergy have been well educated and trained for the ministry. With help from us and from American Friends, the administration of the Province has made significant progress. There is a great deal of ambition, for example, to create a Christian university in the South Sudan, but also a lack of capacity.

Whilst South Sudan is excited about being the newest nation on earth, it is becoming more realistic about the scale of the enormous challenges it faces. In the north, the Republic of Sudan is hardening its identity as an Islamic state. Hundreds of thousands of Christians have moved south. The position of those who remain will be strengthened by the continuing unity of the Episcopal Church and by their continuing external partnerships.

The number of people who thanked me for all that the Diocese of Salisbury has done was very moving. One of the bishops said, “I owe everything to Salisbury”. Others spoke about their visits to parishes, deaneries and to the cathedral. So many people asked me to pass on their good wishes that I can only do so in this most general of ways. I was told repeatedly how much it mattered that Salisbury stayed with them through the worst of the war and that Bishop David and Sarah Stancliffe visited the conflict areas when so much of the world kept away.

It was a very great privilege to open the new science block at Juba Diocesan Model School. This was paid for by a partnership of Christian Aid, Salisbury, and Juba Diocese. The pupils were all turned out beautifully. In large measure it is on them that the future of South Sudan depends.

Now a medical team from the Poole Hospitals has visited, travelling to Wau, teaching at the medical centre. Other groups are going and in January we will be represented at the centenary of the Anglican Cathedral in Khartoum. We are planning for Archbishop Daniel to visit Salisbury and others will be coming in 2012. So the partnership continues. The Church in Sudan will continue to be strengthened by the partnership with us and we will continue to be enriched by our commitment to these Christians with their simple and deep faith, who have so little and who give so much. Grace and peace to those who are far off and to those who are near.”

+ Nicholas Sarum



**SALISBURY/SUDAN LINK**

**Quarterly Bulletin Number 70**

**January 2012**

Published by the Sudan Committee  
of Salisbury Diocese



*O Eternal God, in whose perfect Kingdom no sword is drawn save the sword of righteousness, no strength known save the strength of love, so mightily spread abroad your spirit that all peoples may be reconciled and all nations may be healed and give glory to your name. Amen*

**FOR YOUR NEW DIARY**

**BISHOP'S GARDEN PARTY**

Sunday 10th June from 2.00pm

We are grateful to Bishop Nicholas and Helen for their wish to continue the long tradition of a Summer Garden party in the lovely setting of their South Canonry home in the Close. Proceeds will be for the Medical link, as in the past, and fuller details will be in the Spring issue of this Bulletin.

**SUDAN STUDY DAY**

Saturday 13th October

Shaftesbury School

We all regretted the cancellation of the Study Day last October. Of course it was done for the best of all possible reasons, so that everyone could attend the Commissioning and Installation of Bishop Nicholas at the cathedral. Please note the new date and we will publish the full details when speakers have accepted and the programme is clear. Watch this space.

**MAILING LIST**

We now have two mailing lists: Royal Mail and electronic mail.

It is simpler and cheaper for us to use email and if you are willing to change from one to the other, or if you know anyone who should be added, please let me know. Timothy Biles. Tel 01935 816247 or tim@tjbiles.freemove.co.uk Please help us keep our lists up to date and effective.

## NEWS FROM GOVT OF SUDAN (GOS) AND GOVT OF REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN (RoSS)

**GOS:** The President, Omar Bashir, is under increasing pressure on several fronts. The arrest warrant from The Hague still hangs over him and makes travel beyond a few friendly countries difficult. The opposition, led by the Islamic cleric Hassan Turabi, is stirring an Islamic rebellion. Bashir knows he will go down in history as the man who 'lost' the South and all its oil wealth. To survive in office he is doing two things: he is pacifying Turabi's party by talking tough about imposing Sharia Law and introducing an Islamist State. Secondly he is depending ever more on the army to shore up his position. This means the military has the freedom to do as it wishes with disastrous results for the people on the borderlands, Christian and Moslem, who suffer frequent attacks and displacement with horrific stories of atrocities as the army attempts to retrieve valuable parts of the South.

The chief grievance which may stir revolution is the loss of the oil revenues to the South. As the oil accounted for a huge proportion of the economy the likelihood of living standards falling sharply may fuel the sort of uprising seen in other parts of the Arab regions. The military response would be crucial.

**RoSS:** The Southern President, Salva Kiir, is also under pressure on several fronts. He faces the Northern attacks (above) and the challenge of how to respond. He has asked for the UN to impose a no-fly zone. He faces the rampages of the Lord's Resistance Army in southern regions, they continue to pillage villages and kidnap children. The U.S. is sending a team of advisers to assist. He faces a threat to democratic government from disillusioned former generals who still have their armed supporters from the war years but have not won election in the peace process. In addition there are the constant internal tribal conflicts which have a long unfinished history. All these have a debilitating affect on government and delay the development of the physical infrastructure and of the medical and education services which the people need and which would give confidence. In short, the people have seen very little of the promised 'peace dividend' so far.

The oil revenue dispute remains unresolved. The oil is in the South but has to be piped to and exported from the only port, which is in the North. How should the income be shared? As the two sides could not agree, the African Union (AU) was called to arbitrate. They delivered a verdict which the South accepted but the North rejected. Deadlock! with the North threatening to seize oil in lieu of payment and the South threatening to end all production. The Chinese, who have vested interest, are now offering to arbitrate.

There is little doubt that GOS has been weakened by the Southern independence and that RoSS has yet to prove its ability to protect the people.

## NEWS OF EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF SUDAN (ECS)

**Archbishop Daniel Deng** has been the guest of Bishop Nicholas at South Canonry. They visited London to brief the Archbishop of Canterbury and members of the Foreign Office on the unfolding situation.

**Bishop Andudu** of the Kadugli Diocese (Nuba Mtns) is in the United States where he is seeking political asylum. Many people say he is a target for the GOS military in his home region. It is a huge loss to the diocese where he is much respected and where there are many cries for leadership in violent times.

**Bishop Yousif Abdallah** of the Port Sudan diocese died suddenly while attending a conference with his Northern brother bishops. The diocese of Salisbury shares the shock and sorrow of his family and the people.

**The Provincial Synod** met in November and passed 42 '*Resolutions*'. One of the most significant was the clear intention to hold the North and the South together as one united church serving two divided nations. There is a plan for the North to be 'an internal province' - how this can be achieved will be monitored. There was recognition of several complex needs: the Christians of the North, under an Islamic rule, will face many issues which will call for wider support; the low standard of education in training colleges needs to be addressed; tribalism is seen as a threat to any Christian unity and no diocese or church will be allowed a tribal name or designation; the poor state of the theological colleges was recognised, the option of closure would create further problems as redundancy commitments could not be met; it was resolved to prioritise the long-standing issue of the Provincial debt which is still not cleared; the call for more dioceses (there are now 31) would be checked against agreed criteria testing need and viability.

Two plans for the long term were also affirmed. One was the intention to have Bishop Gwynne College at Juba eventually up-graded to the status of a University. The report which had been commissioned made detailed recommendations which were received and agreed. The second was the order that every diocese should investigate their land ownership, and register it. After years of civil wars and the random movement of people, there are few land ownership records. It is thought that there is considerable amount of church-owned land, potentially of great value, but unregistered and therefore subject to dispute. Proof of ownership in some places is already proving difficult and the litigation is costly and not always successful.

**Visits** The Partnership thrives on visits which increase understanding and build friendships. Dr Robin and Marilyn Sadler have just spent 17 days monitoring Medical Link projects in Juba, Rumbek, Torit, Lui, Maridi, Ibba and Yambio and a Sherborne group will be travelling to their link diocese of Ezo early in the new year.

***NEXT ISSUE OF THIS BULLETIN FIRST WEEK IN APRIL***