

The Sudan Link

by Revd Ian Woodward,
Vicar of the Close

I'm often asked why Salisbury and Sudan or rather 'The Sudans' - what's it all about and why are we so involved?

Here's a little background.

Each diocese in the Church of England has a partnership link usually with another diocese somewhere else in the world-wide Anglican Communion. In Salisbury's case today we have a partnership with two Provinces and some 45 dioceses and more than 55 Bishops, founded in 1973 by Bishop George Reindorp. Next year we celebrate our 45th anniversary. Since independence from the British-Egyptian Condominium 1956, Sudan was plunged into two long civil wars which nominally ended after many years of protracted negotiations, many ceasefires and agreement on self-determination for the south. Independence was granted to South Sudan in 2011 with great hope and expectation given the potential mineral wealth and the desire for what has become an elusive peace. The ceasefire between Sudan and South Sudan particularly in the Nuba Mountains appears to be holding. Very sadly within just 17 months of peace in South Sudan ethnic violence broke out within the country and continues today. Thousands of

people have died in the conflict and many more in the resultant man-made famine and more than two million have fled to Kenya, Uganda and neighbouring countries.

In the midst of all this the Churches have been in a unique position to reach out to all the 30 or so tribes and clans and plead the cause of peace. This is a very tough challenge where ancient resentments and insatiable inter-tribal revenge continues. Our advocacy efforts support peace initiatives working with the Sudans Unit in our Foreign Office, Parliamentary groups and academia and Chatham House the international affairs think tank, and with our partners in the Episcopal Church in the United States.

Our partnership with the Churches of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (the North) and the Episcopal Church of South Sudan is founded on prayer and fellowship and plays a central role not only in the life of our diocese but in our Cathedral too. The chapel next to the Morning Chapel is dedicated to our partnership and the people and Episcopal Churches of both countries. A candle burns there every day of the year and prayers are said for peace and prosperity, forgiveness and reconciliation. It is a haven for prayer and reflection. We focus our efforts on education in training clergy and supporting Church schools, through our Medical



Link in the provision of supplying basic drugs to diocesan clinics and developing maternity skills, and our own deanery to diocesan links. These latter links are not prescriptive but are based on mutual prayer and fellowship and developing local initiatives in many ways from providing bicycles or lap tops or school books or grinding mills etc. We have been hugely encouraged by the amazing response to our 2017 Lent appeal which raised £110,000 for the famine in the opposition areas in Unity State in South Sudan. Working with Christian

Aid we are supporting a whole community there providing essential food for people who have nothing.

2018 will be a year of opportunity and challenge as we continue to pursue peace; the newly independent Province of Sudan under the leadership of Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo takes shape, and in South Sudan Archbishop Daniel Deng, the present Primate retires and elections are held. We pray that his successor will overcome tribal conflicts and, with all the partners, bring not only peace but prosperity too.