

Report on the November 2014 Visit

Many of you will have already heard a talk about the visit to Cueibet last November, read an article about it or watched the film (more later). Much of this came together at the Deanery Sudan Evening in February which began with Bishop Graham Kings' overview of the situation in South Sudan and how the diocesan and deanery links are progressing. This was followed by a presentation by our own team, including a 'premiere' of the film of the visit produced by Dr Elizabeth Hockney.



A full visit report was produced for the Deanery Synod. The Revd Alice Goodall prepared her own account for St Bartholomew Benefice and has kindly agreed to it being reproduced here ...

Alice Goodall's personal account

It was a difficult but rewarding visit. Fighting in the northwest of the country and the lack of strong central government has led to a greater level of insecurity throughout the country. Largely this relates to fighting between clans over cattle, and it was unlikely that we would have been targeted. But it was difficult not to feel vulnerable as we heard of increased numbers of people in hospital with gunshot wounds, or as we saw the shell of a car whilst on the road to Cueibet where five people had been killed earlier in the year.



Inspirational women

However we met some inspirational people.... Deborah the midwife who works with little equipment and no back up, even though she is not paid, because she wants to show God's love to

others. Abraham, a teacher who, in addition to teaching in a local primary school, travels around schools telling children about AIDS – a hidden time bomb likely to become much more evident in 5–10 years. Rebecca, working hard to raise her family of six children whilst also acting as a traditional birth attendant. Peter, a chaplain in the local prison, with some very scary young men. Dr Henry, a Dutch doctor working in the hospital in Cueibet, and Nicola, a German nurse co-ordinating a health care programme in Rumbek. People who give of themselves to help others.



Bishop Elijah introduces the team, minus the Revd Rick Williams – photographer!

And we heard about good things that are happening.... Through the fruit trees project we have been supporting, 100 saplings have been given out to 30 families in the Diocese with training in how to look after them. Through a combination of money from the South Sudan Government and a charity, the hospital is developing well and plans to focus on obstetrics and childcare. The church has established a new school. A bore hole is being provided by another charity. And the prison rehabilitation garden was amazing.



Well protected fruit trees

So what contribution did we make? Well, we ran two small conferences: one for pastors about discipleship, and one for women leaders. And we

took with us seven sewing machines. Dr Sherwood Elcock, one of the team, taught the basics of how to use them to six women from different parts of the Diocese.



The Great Cueibet Sewing Bee

He also was responsible for finding the right spectacles for people needing them from the 70 odd pairs that you donated. The schools were very grateful for the pens, pencils, rubbers and pencil sharpeners. And those wonderful bras you gave – we gave them to leaders from the Mothers Union who planned to sell them in the market to raise money to buy material for the sewing machines.



One size fits all!

But I think the most important thing we did was to encourage. We had discovered that in Kajo Keji, near the southern border with Uganda, there is no word for 'encourage'. I am not sure that there is a word in Dinka for 'thank you'. Now, I have noticed that it is when I am tired, that I get most grumpy. And when I am tired and grumpy, I am more likely to focus inwards, fail to notice what others are doing, and forget to say 'thank you'. And I guess for those living in South Sudan, struggling with the heavy demands of basic survival, the worries of insecurity, the exhaustion of an inadequate diet and bad health, encouragement is probably not

top of their agenda. And yet, of course, it can make a huge difference to all of us. I think, from their reactions, that our visit, our interest, as well as your gifts and your interest, did encourage the people that we met.



The future – how can we help them?

So thank you for the support you gave to the trip. Thank you for your donations of money which enabled me to be a part of it. Thank you for your gifts of glasses, bras, pencils, torches, sewing things, mosquito nets and so on which were so much appreciated by those who received them. And please continue to pray for Cueibet and to support the Deanery's link.

Keeping connected

Much progress had been made in publicising our link since the last Newsletter, although there is much more to do:

Website – thanks to Tony Gowers, we are now developing our own pages on the Cueibet Diocese website – see top of this page for the web-link

Talks – members of the group are available to talk about the visit and other aspects of our link – contact Revd Alice Goodall (see below)

Giving through Gift Aid – you can now donate directly to the Chalke Cueibet Fund using Gift Aid – contact our treasurer, Gerry Purdue (see below)

Your Support – our next Newsletter will set out the plans for 2015 and how you can become involved, but don't let that stop you contacting us now!

Contacts

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