

Introduction to the Partnership between Chalke Deanery (Wiltshire) – Cueibet Diocese (South Sudan)

Salisbury-Sudan Link. The Diocese of Salisbury formed a partnership with the Anglican Church in Sudan in 1972/73 since when close personal and organisational ties have developed between the two parties. Educational and medical aid has been provided to the Sudan by Salisbury Diocese which has also been a strong advocate of the Sudan at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO). The FCO values the existence of this partnership.

The last four decades have seen worsening strife and eventually over 25 years of civil war between the northern and southern parts of the country; the North (pre-dominantly Arab & Muslim) and the South (pre-dominantly African & Christian), following a referendum in the South, broke apart and in 2011 the new state of The Republic of South Sudan was established.

There are commercial quantities of oil in South Sudan but the pipeline to get it to the Red Sea coast passes through the North which continues to prevent its passage. In addition to this impasse, other cross-border disputes continue but without the focus of the war against the North, many communities in the South have resorted to domestic land disputes and cattle raiding. Against this background of unrest, of lack of money and infrastructure and of corruption, the President and Vice President of South Sudan fell out with each other and violence between their political and tribal factions erupted in November/December 2013. The violence has been localised but those areas which have remained peaceful have had to absorb large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) from the troubled areas. To exacerbate this refugee problem, the Christians in the North are being persecuted and large numbers have fled and will continue to flee south over the border to South Sudan.

The Republic of South Sudan is one of the World's poorest states; the depth of its poverty, homelessness and the deprivation of its refugee camps offer a shocking picture of deprivation and need.

The church in the Republic of Sudan (the North), known as the Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS), is in retreat whilst in the Republic of South Sudan, since 2014 known as the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS), it is growing significantly. The two Provinces share the same Archbishop and each consist of a number of dioceses one of which in South Sudan is the Diocese of Cueibet (pronounced Shebet). Cueibet has not witnessed any of the recent violence but has had to absorb many IDPs. Whilst not lawless, the Diocese, located in the Lakes State of South Sudan, is not free from the criminality of cattle raiding.

Salisbury Diocese and its Deaneries. The Diocese of Salisbury consists of 19 Deaneries each of which consists of several Benefices which in turn contain several parishes. Since 2004, Deaneries have been encouraged to establish partnerships with dioceses in ECS & ECSS.

In Wiltshire, from the south of the City of Salisbury and stretching westwards towards Shaftesbury and north lies the Chalke Deanery consisting of 5 benefices and 34

parishes; since 2014 it has included the Benefice of Wilton with Netherhampton and Fugglestone and has a population of approximately 13,000. In 2012 the Deanery decided to establish a partnership with the Diocese of Ceuibet since when the Deanery has sent two parties to visit Cueibet (in 2013 and 2014), and its Bishop has visited the Chalke Deanery three times. In 2013 he had a hip replacement operation in Salisbury District Hospital part funded by the Deanery.

Chalke Deanery is reviewing its current programme of projects delivered in support of Cueibet Diocese and how best to structure it for the next five years and beyond. It is looking for new partners within and beyond its geographical boundaries, in this country and abroad, to help achieve its much needed humanitarian objectives.