



Jos Jottings, December 2024

"Deliver me from evildoers and save me from those who are after my blood." (Psalm 59:2)

Nigerian Christian rural communities who faced deadly persecution over Christmas

Thank you for your prayers for our sisters and brothers in Nigeria over the Christmas period. When Bishop Mark and Canon Tim Swan of Anglican Aid had an initial teleconference with Rt Rev Dr Ephraim Gongden, the new Bishop of Jos, on Monday evening 16 December, Bishop Ephraim asked specifically for our prayers. He told us that denominational leaders including himself had recently met with Plateau State Governor Caleb Mutfwang to draw the authorities' attention to a series of letters circulated to predominantly Christian rural communities, threatening attacks over the Christmas period similar to Christmas 2023. In that context, he specifically asked for (and was assured of) our continuing prayers for protection of those communities, and for the authorities to act decisively against any attackers.

While there was one horrific Fulani attack on a Plateau State village on Sunday 22 December (see below), and an even worse series of coordinated Fulani herdsman attacks on five predominantly Christian villages in Benue State (south of Plateau State) on Christmas Day, Plateau State avoided a repeat of last year's massacres. While our hearts go out in prayer for comfort and justice for those who were victims this Christmas season, thank you for your prayers for protection of our sisters and brothers, answered at least in part by our loving Lord.



On the evening of Sunday 22 December, immediately after a carol service at the ECWA church in Gidan Ado village in Riyom Local Government Area (some 30kms southwest of Jos), the village was reportedly attacked and set ablaze by armed Fulani tribesmen on motorbikes. 15 were reportedly killed (including a pregnant woman, a baby and a 13 year-old child), with 2 more seriously injured and hospitalised. Imagine starting your Christmas celebrations as this community did with an interdenominational burial

service the very next day, on Monday 23 December! (see photo, with ECWA, Anglican, Roman Catholic and charismatic church leaders all represented).

Fortunately, the Nigerian Army – though missing in action the night of the killings – seems to have taken immediate effective action afterwards. On 28 December, local commander Maj Gen Abubakar (who attended the village funeral service) announced the arrest of 20 suspects and the seizure of a major cache of arms and ammunition, after all-night military operations. This may well have headed off other possible attacks over Christmas itself.



Unfortunately, further south in southeast Benue State, Morning Star News reported on 30 December that five predominantly Christian villages had been subject to coordinated Fulani tribesmen attacks on Christmas Day, with 33 confirmed dead and many others injured or still unaccounted-for, and villages burned and plundered. Local residents pointed to the Christmas Day timing the unprovoked nature of the attacks, and the specific targeting of Christians as evidence once again of religiously-motivated violence and ethnic cleansing.

All this has made both Bishop Ephraim and ourselves specially keen to get Australian Emergency Relief funds moving as quickly as possible to support these and other persecuted communities.

The new Tambes campus of Zambiri School



The latest update report on progress being made on final preparations for the planned 2025 opening of the new Tambes campus of the Zambiri School is still awaited. But Archbishop Kwashi's Christmas greetings included the great news that over 80,000 mud-bricks have now been manufactured and stockpiled on site, ready for an expected major construction effort starting right after New Year's Day 2025 (ie. right now). Needs at the original Zambiri campus in Jos itself has necessitated some additional construction there of hostel rooms. In the meantime, the Bishop passes on his and Mama Gloria's deepest thanks and gratitude: "God has used you more than you know, and we bear witness that we are beneficiaries of the grace of God as channelled through you."

Christian Institute, Jos



The Institute's end-of-first semester report contained heart-warming accounts from our bursary students on how they are growing in their studies and their spiritual formation journey. Amos (left) tells us that he is loving the opportunity to study the Bible more closely, picking up vital details he had missed before. He also asks us to pray that changes to administration and staffing do not interrupt lecture schedules! Meanwhile Ishaku Sunday (right) gives thanks that the combination of liturgical and academic training, and learning through daily manual cleaning (including of toilets) and other duties and chores is equipping him well for future servant ministry! Both thank you for your generosity in supporting their ministry training.



Teleconference with Bishop Ephraim, Monday 16 December

Many thanks for your prayers – richly answered – for a fruitful meeting of our Missional Partnership principals, and a good start to establishing the personal relationships of trust and shared vision which are so important to the future thriving of the Partnership. Please keep praying for Bishop Ephraim as he builds up his new administrative team and wisdom in appointing key ministry and mission leaders for Jos Diocese.

For prayer:

- Praise God for the fruitful teleconference meeting between him and Bishop Mark and Canon Tim Swan on 16 December (notwithstanding some technical challenges limiting video contact!).
- Praise God for the reduced level of attacks this last Christmas on Christian rural communities in Plateau State, and for the more proactive role of the Nigerian Army in bringing perpetrators to account, while at the same time praying for comfort and justice for those whose communities were attacked.
- Pray for good progress as construction goes ahead quickly in the New Year working bee, and those 80,000 bricks become hostel, security and residence walls at the Tambes campus of the Zambiri School!
- Pray for quick appointment of the new Jos Diocese Welfare team and distribution of emergency relief.

To make a tax-deductible donation to Diocesan partnership projects for training at the Christian Institute, or to support our persecuted fellow-Christians in Plateau State in Nigeria, or ministry to "at risk" children through the Tambes campus of the Zambiri School, go to <https://anglicanaid.org.au/locations/Nigeria> , and select the project of your preference. To book a presentation on the situation in Nigeria and our partnership with Jos Diocese for your church, school or fellowship group, contact Rev Canon Patrick Cole on pandncole@bigpond.com .