



## Jos Jottings, January 2024

### Investing in a new future, binding up the wounds

January has been a month of deep encouragement, but also further grief in our Diocesan Mission Partnership with the Diocese of Jos in Nigeria and Anglican Aid.



On the plus side, this is Catechist Joshua Manasseh, one of 10 bursary students funded under the partnership for their theological and community leadership studies at the *Christian Institute, Jos*. Joshua started semester one of the first year of his Bachelor in Theology Degree studies late last year, and has just finished that semester of study on 2 February 2024. He is attached to St. Bartholomew's Lighthouse Church, Rantya, in inner-city Jos, ministering in an inner-city environment with many challenges. He tells us he has specially enjoyed learning to know Christ at a deeper level, how to study the Bible more

effectively and better communicate its good news to others, and the experience of a strengthened prayer life. While expressing his deepest gratitude to all who have contributed money to support his studies, he asks we pray he may remain faithful to the Lord, and not disappoint Him. I'm sure this is a prayer we will whole-heartedly support!

In light of ongoing donor generosity (one parish recently contributed \$6,500 to the project, enough for 10 bursaries for a year!), we are reviewing options to step up the bursary programme.

Construction work is continuing on the new *Tambes/Pankshin campus of the Zambiri School*, and Bishop Ben and Mama Gloria Kwashi are preparing to move there in the next few months.

The need for the school, and for the *Emergency Relief* leg of our Mission Partnership has been dramatically underlined by the devastating, deadly and coordinated Fulani and Islamic terrorist attacks on 21 predominantly Christian villages over the Christmas weekend (see the December edition of Jos Jottings for details). Attacks and massacres have continued during January:

- in Plateau State over 22-24 January, more than 30 Christians were reportedly killed in coordinated attacks on Kwahaslalek, Marian, and Kinat villages, as well as the towns of Jakatai, Sabon Gari and Mangu, in Mangu Local Government Area, and on Butura Kampani and Gada villages in Bokkos Local Government Area on 17 January (with many more injured, and thousands reportedly displaced;
- meanwhile in Benue State (south of Plateau State), 11 villages (Abuge, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Ogwumogbo, Ejima, Ogbeyi, Ocholonya, and Olegobidu in Agatu LGA, plus three other villages in Logo LGA) were attacked on 7 and 18 January, with 10 reported deaths, many injured, extensive destruction of homes and property, and the displacement of hundreds of villagers.

On 30 January, thanks to the generosity of donors in response to our early January appeal, Anglican Aid was able to transfer \$4,300 to Jos Diocese for urgent relief work. Archdeacon Chimeziem Anukam reports that Anglicans in Jos are working closely with other Christian organisations to provide material and spiritual relief to the thousands now living in designated internally-displaced persons (IDP) camps within Plateau State. Your donations have helped fund immediate needs for food, shelter, clothing, and health-care for families driven out of their homes, quite often with all their belongings destroyed.

Archdeacon Chimeziem reports that, as of end-January, roughly 18,751 people are currently housed in 15 IDP camps and compounds in southern Plateau State supported by Jos Diocese, other Christian churches, and community groups. Within this cross-section of those displaced, and reflecting the way the targeted violence has affected the most vulnerable, 2,081 are widows, 823 are orphans, 6,066 are children 0-5 years old, and 1,057 are aged. This group of just 6,603 households – largely from the Mangu Local Government Area – report 305 relatives killed in the armed attacks on them.



### **Displaced families in an IDP camp in a disused school compound**

Aside from emphasising the scale of the immediate challenges being faced by our sisters and brothers in Jos, all this also shows the importance of Bishop Ben and Mama Gloria’s longer-term strategic ministry to provide security, education and health-care to the orphans and disadvantaged children, who are the human result of these attacks.

Like me, you probably wonder why these attacks on Christian communities in Nigeria are never reported in our Australian media, or seem to be raised to the attention of a community focussed on our wallets, our sporting teams, our music and film celebrities, and even the state of US politics. Part of our missional partnership with the Diocese of Jos includes using our ability here in Australia to advocate and speak for those whose voices and tears, while heard by our loving Saviour, are largely ignored by secular leaders. I am pleased to report that after the Christmas weekend attacks, Bishop Mark wrote to both the Nigerian High Commissioner here in Canberra and to our Foreign Minister Sen. the Hon Penny Wong, outlining the dire situation faced by Christian communities in Plateau State and elsewhere in Nigeria, urging appropriate action by Nigerian and Australian governments.

#### **For prayer:**

- Pray for Catechist Joshua Manasseh and his colleagues to remain faithful and grow in Jesus!
- Please pray for internal and international representations (like our own) to Nigerian Government leaders to bear fruit in authorities acting to act to bring peace, safety and effective protection to the ordinary people of Nigeria, as well as non-corrupt government.
- Continue to pray **by name** for the Plateau State villages attacked over December/January.
- Pray for extraordinary energy, grace and protection for the thousands of locals in make-shift IDP camps in Plateau State, and for Jos Diocese workers seeking to meet human needs in this crisis.
- Over and above government and security force protective action, please pray that God will raise up evangelists from amongst the Fulani people to turn their hearts to Jesus, and to peace.
- Keep praying for the Nigerian Anglican House of Bishops in selecting a new Bishop for Jos.

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”, 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](mailto:pandncole@bigpond.com) .