



Jos Jottings, June 2023

“Good shepherds”, or “hired hands”?

I shared with you last month about my 29 April visit to the devastated community of Runji Village in southern Kaduna State, Nigeria. When I prayed with the survivors of a brutal Islamic attack on 15-16 April, there standing as a leader amongst the remaining community was their local Anglican priest and his wife. No doubt anxious for the future, but still staying faithfully amongst the burned-out homes to watch over and care for their devastated and traumatised flock. My first thought was what very special people they were! I’d be tempted to rationalise protecting myself, to run from unspeakable violence and danger. These were precious people, who took seriously Jesus’s call to be “good shepherds” not hired hands!

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand...sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf snatches and scatters them”. John 11:11-12

I wasn’t specially surprised to hear that this priest had trained at the Christian Institute in Jos, the only Anglican Bible college serving Nigeria’s disadvantaged and strife-torn northeast, and one of the projects we are supporting in our Diocesan mission partnership.

This is a college operating in the face of extreme challenges. Its mission is specifically to raise up and train ministry candidates coming out of Christian communities where poverty and persecution – killings, burnings and lootings of churches and Christians’ homes – are facts of everyday life. The Institute operates on the smell of an oily rag materially-speaking, in order to make high-quality spiritual formation, ministry training, and community leadership preparation accessible to candidates with almost no financial resources and lower education qualifications. Church selection and Institute training of these candidates focusses on the expectation that they will then return to underprivileged and persecuted rural communities, to be faithful there in ministry and gospel good works. Men and women who understand that Jesus is calling them to life-changing, but personally costly, ministry.

It takes a good theological college to raise a faithful pastor who can preserve a village’s life!



Faithful pastor (2nd from left)



Faithful preparation: CI Rector, staff & students

Our annual support of 10 training bursaries for ministry at the Christian Institute will help 10 high-quality candidates selected from Jos and a range of adjacent Anglican dioceses in northeast Nigeria to undertake a 3-year BTh ministry and practical community leadership residential training course. Right now, about \$600 Australian buys a year's board, lodging and tuition for one student – which must rate as pretty much the biggest “bang for the gospel buck” anywhere in the world! This is training that will make a real difference to great swathes of northeast Nigeria and beyond, as the good news of Jesus and the good works transform and strengthen some of the poorest and most persecuted communities in the world. No wonder Christian Institute graduates are in high demand in Jos and adjacent dioceses!

Take a moment to:

- hear the Christian Institute Rector, Dr Godwin Makabi, set out the mission and challenges faced by the Institute in a 28 April 2023 video interview with me onsite at the Institute, at <https://youtu.be/Gak2fMGUMRA> ; and,
- meet a typical Christian Institute student, Catechist Thomas Ishaia, as he speaks with me about his context, his calling into ministry, and his training at the Christian Institute for future challenging ministry in his home state (<https://youtu.be/tL4SKWbwp2Y>).

Ongoing attacks on Christian communities in Plateau State

Like me, your heart will no doubt ache to hear that unprovoked, planned and deadly attacks by Fulani Islamic extremists on mainly Christian villages have continued unabated in May/June. Alongside killings and destruction of villages in Nasarawa and Benue States:

- over 300 Christians were reportedly killed in a coordinated wave of Fulani attacks on 20 villages in the Mangu Local Government Area south of Jos in Plateau State over the period 15-17 May, and again overnight on 4 June. Local pastors reported the displacement of thousands of residents, destruction of homes and churches, and widespread looting of grain; and,
- further targeted attacks in Mangu LGA, as well as in previously-attacked Riyom and Barkin Ladi LGA's in Plateau State, on 11, 18 and 20 June reportedly killed scores more villagers (including a pastor) and saw one village completely burned down.

For prayer:

- Praise God for the amazing, strategic and life-transforming ministry of the Christian Institute, Jos, and pray for Dr Makabi, faculty and students, as well as for generous resourcing under our partnership to help the Institute's ministry to prosper and grow.
- Thank God for the faithful “good shepherd” ministry of Christian Institute graduates standing alongside their flocks and not running in the face of danger and persecution.
- Please keep praying for the people of Runji village, and other rural communities in Plateau State, as they try to recover from these continuing attack, that they will be able to re-establish their homes and livelihoods, continue to cling to the truth of the gospel, and keep trusting in our Lord of comfort, peace and healing.
- Pray that emergency relief supplies and community support funded under our mission partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Jos will encourage and give new hope to Christians injured, traumatised, left destitute and displaced by attacks.
- Praise God for recent news that Archbishop Ben Kwashi's medical check in the US has just confirmed that he remains in remission from cancer; and keep praying for a smooth handover to a new Diocesan Bishop after Ben retires later this year.

To make a tax-deductible donation to projects under our Diocesan partnership for training at the Christian Institute, or to support our persecuted fellow-Christians in Jos and Plateau State in Nigeria, go to <https://anglicanaid.org.au/locations/Nigeria> . 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 .