



Jos Jottings, June 2024

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd, ... sees the wolf coming, and runs away ... because the hired hand does not care for the sheep.”
(John 10:11-13)

You will recall that after the May Jos Jotting, focussing on the Emergency Relief strand of our Diocesan Missional Partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Jos in Nigeria, I promised to report in following editions on the remaining two strands of our assistance in light of my 8-16 May visit there. So this month, we look at our support of Christian ministry and community leadership formation through the Christian Institute, Jos, the only Anglican seminary serving the huge needs of the predominantly Hausa-speaking Anglican dioceses of northeast Nigeria, and mission fields beyond.

Christian Institute trainees in action

Being a village pastor and community leader in rural communities which are both economically deeply underprivileged and under pretty constant threat of deadly attack for their Christian faith is incredibly demanding. Our Lord Jesus made clear to his first disciples that following him, as the Good Shepherd, meant that they needed to follow his example. They needed to be ready to lay down their lives for his sheep, those who believed in and followed Jesus. In northeast Nigeria, the cost of a calling to ministry isn't metaphoric or symbolic. The lives of ordinary Christians – but even more so of their pastors – are literally on the line.

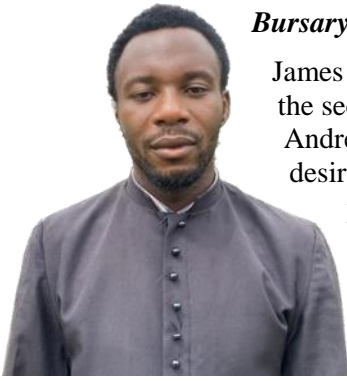
Morning Star News reported that at midnight on 2 June, ethnic Fulani terrorists attacked and killed a 63 year old Assemblies of God pastor Dauda Dalyop and his wife, plus three other Christians, and severely injured two more, in the mainly Christian village of Ari Hongo, in the Kimakpa area of Bassa Local Government Area, Plateau State. This is just 7-10 kms from where I was when visiting the Alheri Anglican Church in Kwall village on 11 May. This targeted killing came on top of Islamic herdsmen killing two other Christians in the Kwall area at the end of May, and kidnapping a Roman Catholic priest in neighbouring Kaduna State early on the morning of 9 June. Even when I visited, there were rumours of an impending Fulani attack on Kwall, after some other killings in the days previous. Nevertheless, the parish priest and his wife - the teacher and driving force behind the village primary school established in the make-shift timber and corrugated iron church (see photo) - remained faithfully with the flock they served, no doubt delighting the heart of Archdeacon Godwin Makabi (right of photo), outgoing head of the Christian Institute.



Rural ministry by Christian Institute students



Throughout Bassa Local Government Area northwest of Jos City (Archdeacon Makabi's new and very challenging rural assignment) I was privileged to see Christian Institute-trained clergy and students serving faithfully and imaginatively in a series of rural and town church plants. Whether in dirt-poor agricultural communities, or in the Bassa Town Gospel Chapel (built as a quiet haven literally right in the middle of shanty-town slum beer-halls, open-air breweries and brothels behind the Bassa markets, see photo), their faithful service was seeing gospel growth, people learning to read and write through parish literacy programs, and lives dramatically changed through faith in Jesus.



Bursary Student profile: Agwom James Kaze

James is a Jos Diocese clergy candidate, whom I met at the Christian Institute, and is in the second year of his BTh studies, attached as a catechist to the Jos city parish of St Andrew's Hwolshe. He tells us that being at the Christian Institute has increased his desire to know God, discover a "better version of myself", and how to interact better pastorally. His special message for us, his sponsors, is: "I want to use this opportunity to thank all my sponsors out there. Your support has helped me, and is still helping me, to build a closer relationship with God. You are raising up a soldier for Jesus Christ, who by the help of God will never be ashamed of the gospel." For its part, the Christian Institute faculty ask for our special prayers for the security of students and their families, and for their effectiveness in training students to be a transformational gospel missionary force in the telling the good news and in practical deeds and programs of grace at village level (see below).

Faculty profile: Rev Canon Rotshak Daniel Lar

Rev Daniel is Registrar and Lecturer at the Christian Institute, a key position in the midst of change in the Diocese and Christian Institute leadership. He asks for prayer for him in his role of teaching Systematic Theology, Pastoral Counselling, Biblical Counselling, and the Pastoral Epistles, especially as he struggles with irregular power supplies at the Christian Institute (an endemic problem in Nigerian cities and towns as power prices rise and infrastructure fails!) and poor IT support. Pray also that he might continue in the midst of these hardships and challenges to find joy in seeing his students grow in their faith!



"Joy for Jos" fund-raising concert 7.30pm, Saturday 14 September

A special "save the date" request for those of you in easy reach of Canberra. The missions committee of St George's Pearce has planning well advanced for a special fund-raising concert at a central Canberra location. This will feature gifted Christian musicians giving of their time to bring us a wonderful evening of new music and song in a new album launch. They are planning that Jos-themed Christmas cards might also be available to order, specifically to support the new Pankshin/Tambes campus of the Zambiri school and hostel for orphans and disadvantaged children. Watch for more details coming shortly!

For prayer:

- Pray for James and his fellow-students at the Christian Institute, Jos, that they may indeed grow in knowledge, wisdom and the character of Jesus as they study, and are equipped in every way to be faithful caring and fruitful under-shepherds after the heart of Jesus, wherever they serve.
- Keep praying for persecuted Christian rural communities in Plateau State: for those in Barakin Ladi, Bokkos, and Mangu Local Government Areas seeking relief and resettlement, and for those in Bassa LGA and Kaduna State who have suffered Fulani attacks in the last month.
- Pray for greater diligence and effectiveness by the Nigerian Army and police in providing security, and an effective government resettlement and community justice program.
- As the faculty of the Christian Institute has asked, please pray specially for those students ministering in or coming from persecuted communities, that their families remaining in those communities may be kept safe, so that the students are not distracted from their studies by understandable worry and concern over those family members and their circumstances.
- In the face of constant financial and staffing pressures, please pray that the Christian Institute is able to keep, and be effective in, its strategic mission focus of raising up young people equipped and motivated to serve Jesus and his people through the healing power of the gospel in word and practical deed.
- Please also pray for God to raise up quickly one who deeply shares his own Good Shepherd heart for the flock and for the lost as the new Anglican Bishop of 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 .