



Jos Jottings, November 2024

"Comfort, comfort my people, ... your hard service has been completed, and your sin paid for." (Isaiah 40:1)

New Bishop for Jos, Rt Rev Dr Ephraim Gongden



Thank you for your prayers for Rt Rev Dr Ephraim Gongden, the new Bishop of Jos, as he makes initial appointments to his new diocesan leadership team during, and now following, his first diocesan synod held 22-24 November. Please keep him specially in your prayers for wisdom and grace as he continues to familiarise himself with the detailed challenges the diocese is facing, and the demands of his new ministry as bishop. We hope that Bishop Mark and Canon Tim Swan of Anglican Aid will be able to meet with Bishop Ephraim by video link ahead of Christmas to both establish personal contact, and to ensure timely updating of all the administrative contact and communications arrangements which enable our Missional Partnership to thrive. Your prayer that we will be able to facilitate this meeting quickly across two global time-zones and coordinate three very busy ministry schedules would be appreciated! Bishop Ephraim has set a new mission statement for the Diocese to "Facilitate authentic relationships with Jesus, fostering spiritual maturity, multiplying church growth and community engagement, and preparing hearts for Christ's return" (photo of Bishop Ephraim during the recent synod at left).

Christian rural communities facing likely persecution over Christmas

You will recall the devastating series of coordinated and targeted attacks on over 20 predominantly Christian rural villages in Barakin Ladi, Bokkos and Mangu Local Government Areas in Plateau State over the Christmas weekend last year. The fear with which our sisters and brothers in Christ face this coming Christmas is something which specially weighs on Bishop Ephraim's heart, given that he himself was born in a village community in Mangu LGA. And we are confident that he will be all the more ardent a supporter of the Emergency Relief component of our Diocesan Missional Partnership, which at present is specially supporting ongoing relief and community restoration programs in those three LGA's, boosted by part of the proceeds of a special Anglican Aid appeal for persecuted Christian communities across the world.

Sporadic Fulani and Islamic terrorist attacks have been continuing during November in Plateau State, and its western and southern neighbours (Kaduna and Benue states respectively). There was also heavy fighting in early November between well-armed Islamic militants and the Nigerian Army in the Kukawa area of Borno State, on the shores of Lake Chad in far northeast Nigeria. Here a coalition of Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist militant groups brazenly attacked a Nigerian Army outpost, a "first" for some time, spurring fears of more aggressive terrorist attacks throughout the northeast. While the Fulani attacks in Plateau State (unusually) claimed only a handful of victims, they indicated continuing deadly threats on farming community members in Mangu and North Jos LGA's, while a series of coordinated Sunday and weekend attacks on Christian communities in northeast Benue State claimed more than 30 lives and left many others injured on 23-24 November.

Please pray that our Lord Jesus will indeed as our loving Lord of all and provider of comfort give our sisters and brothers living in fear both protection and special comfort through his Holy Spirit this Christmas season, including by turning the hearts of Fulani Islamic extremists towards himself as Saviour of the world and the Prince of Peace. That's a big prayer, but our Lord Jesus is indeed more than big enough to deliver on those Isaiah 40 promises that he will reveal his glory to all humanity!

Christian Institute, Jos

Students and faculty are now coming to the end of their first semester studies, and Anglican Aid will shortly be receiving detailed reporting on how our bursary students at the Christian Institute have been doing this year so far in their studies and in their formation ahead of taking up gruelling pastoral assignments in tough neighbourhoods. In addition to praying for them, and for teaching faculty members, please pray that we and the Christian Institute will have wisdom in considering ways in which this bursary program might be extended in number and range of coverage. Once again, as the only Anglican Bible college in northeast Nigeria specifically catering to the ministry needs of the impoverished and persecuted predominantly ethnic Hausa region of northeast Nigeria, the mission and ongoing health of the Christian Institute is vital to the dynamic growth of the faith in this really tough region!

The new Tambes campus of Zambiri School: fund-raising Christmas cards available!

We are also expecting in coming days an update report on progress being made on final preparations for the planned 2025 opening of the new Tambes campus of the Zambiri School (including hopefully completion of the new perimeter wall required by security developments, of the water-supply and electrical infrastructure, and completion of the first hostel accommodation block). Thank you also for those who purchased fund-raising Christmas cards produced by our friends at St George's Anglican Church Pearce (as advertised in the October "Jos Jottings"). Thank you also for those other parishes which have contacted me to say that they are currently making contributions to the project via their respective mission giving programs!

Christmas: the festival of the Saviour who gives...

Friends, this is one of the two times in the year when my wife and I sit down and prayerfully decide to make those extra donations from the heart. And we do this around Christmas because (unlike tax time!) we try to focus our hearts on following in the footsteps of our loving Saviour who gave us his all, not the motivation of tax-deductibility (wonderful as that may also be). Not to get a taxation benefit, but to follow joyfully in Jesus's footsteps in some very small way. A moving Christmas hymn – written by that great Anglican missionary to China (and Bishop of East Szechwan!), Frank Houghton, to honour the deaths in mission service of missionary colleagues John and Betty Stam, captured and killed by Communist forces – goes: "You who were rich beyond all splendour, yet for love's sake becamest poor". Let's look this Christmas season again in love and awe at the beauty of Jesus, and let our hearts beat to his heartbeat, taking our wallets along for the ride!

For prayer:

- Please keep praying for Bishop Gongden, that the Holy Spirit will empower him to lead with vision, godly wisdom and deep integrity, especially as he draws together his new diocesan leadership team, and for a fruitful video conference meeting between him and Bishop Mark and Canon Tim Swan ahead of Christmas to facilitate and strengthen our Diocesan Missional Partnership.
- Pray especially for divine protection this Christmas time for those persecuted Christian rural communities in Plateau State, and for the hearts of the persecutors to be miraculously turned to follow Jesus the Prince of Peace, so that those in Africa and we in Australia see the miracle of Jesus making peace as scripture promises by his blood of the cross.
- Pray for those Christian Institute bursary students and faculty reaching the end of this semester's studies and for their protection and encouragement over the Christmas period, especially for those travelling home to rural communities and families there.
- Pray for continuing effective distribution of emergency relief supplies by the Diocese of Jos to the victims of ethnic-cleansing violence in rural Plateau State and neighbouring Kaduna State.
- Keep praying for the resources to continue to be raised up, and construction work to go ahead quickly, enabling the initial opening of the Tambes campus of the Zambiri School by early 2025, and its completion.

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 .