



IDWAL

(Inter Diocesan West Africa Link)

Pompey West Africa Links

February 2018
Issue 21 Part A

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A visit to Ho

Global Family

Plus Part B: Ryde

School Special

There's So Much to Share With You!

IDWAL Newsletter 21 has been produced in two parts: A & B

In Part B pupils from Ryde School share amazing insights from their recent visit to Ghana.

Welcome to Ghana's two new Bishops:

Alex Asmah - Bishop of the Diocese of Sekondi, linked with the Fareham Deanery

Felix Annancy – Bishop elect of the Diocese of Koforidua linked with the Havant Deanery

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Like all new Bishops in the Anglican Communion both have been invited to this year's Canterbury New Bishops' Conference. With visas granted and flights confirmed, we look forward to their arrival in the UK for the start of the conference on 2 February. They will be coming to Portsmouth on 12 Feb before finally returning to Ghana on 20 Feb.

Naturally each will spend most of their time with their link Deaneries.

However both will be joining in with the Cathedral's Shrove Tuesday celebrations on 13 February. Do come and join them for Evensong at 6.00pm followed by free pancakes and a Q & A session with Bishop Christopher.

Interestingly, Bishop Felix writes that he has recently married Barbara on 5th Jan in Accra. Sadly his first wife, Grace, died some years ago.

General Synod update –

Portsmouth IDWAL is ahead of the game!

Four primates from member churches of the Anglican Communion have been invited to attend the February meeting of the C of E's General Synod. The Synod will debate a motion affirming the companion links between the C of E's dioceses and other churches of the Communion. The motion calls on parishes, deaneries and dioceses of the C of E to make international links a central part of their strategy for mission and discipleship. And it asks dioceses to use their companion links to maximise their contribution to the hospitality programme prior to the 2020 Lambeth Conference.

By expanding our perceptions of God's work in the world, the diocesan companion links have much to contribute to the development of faith, discipleship and mission in the C of E. It is through encounter between Christians from different cultures that faith is enlivened, friendships are built and vision for mission expanded."

We look forward to hearing more from Emily Bagg, our Synod rep and Newsletter publisher.

Canon Marion Syms IDWAL Hon. Sec

Visit to Ho 2017

David & Jeanette Power and Simon Long

We arrived at 9.00 p.m. on 28 September, were scanned for Ebola on the way to passport control, emerged into the heat, dust and vibrant life of Accra, and were so glad to be met by Bishop Matthias. After an hour's drive through the darkness, we arrived at our hotel for the night. The following day we drove via the huge Lake Volta to Ho, where, after several hours in the blazing heat in a battered car with no air conditioning, we were delighted to arrive at the Freedom Hotel.

No time to rest. That evening, we accompanied Simon to Ho Cathedral, where he met the Musical Director of the Cathedral choir, the Bishop's son Prosper, and Hope the Musical Director of St. Paul's, Agbozume. Simon immediately got to work, training the choir in some basic vocal skills, which were then put to good use in singing some hymns, most of which we recognised from our long-discarded hymnbook 'Hymns Ancient & Modern'.

The following day we travelled south-east to Agbozume, arriving just before sundown. The St. Paul's choir had gathered in the large church and Simon began another rehearsal. Afterwards we adjourned to the 3-room vicarage being built little by little, as funds allow, for a delightful simple meal. Eating there was a humbling experience, for they gladly shared the little they had.

The next day Sunday, we drove to St. Paul's for the morning Eucharist at 9.00 a.m. It proved a much shorter service than usual, lasting only two and a half hours. Wonderful joyful dancing and singing, especially at the Gloria, and the congregation smiled broadly as they danced their way up the aisle to place their collection in the offerings box. Through this simple activity, St. Paul's teaching that "God loves a cheerful giver" was made present in our midst. Jeanette did very well at the dancing: David not so good. And no, he will not be giving a demonstration on his return to the parish.

David preached on the epistle to Philippians: "Be of the same mind...," reminding the people that unity in the

body of Christ is a prerequisite for effective mission. The congregation applauded politely at the end! Bishop Matthias then preached it all over again, this time in the local dialect, Ewe, pronounced "Ebe". He then presided at the Eucharist, inviting David to administer the bread. Most received directly into the mouth, and it was a humbling privilege to find myself posting wafers into African mouths, including that of a blind man.

After further singing came the notices, then a second collection, this time in aid of the vicarage construction. More dancing up the aisle. Then Bishop Matthias auctioned a pineapple for the vicarage funds, each bid being loudly applauded. A persuasive auctioneer, Matthias drove the price up to 60 Cedis, more than £10.50, resulting in much laughter, for everyone knew he had paid under 20p for it!

After the service Simon worked once more with the choir members and their leaders, spending two hours polishing their performance. There was a definite improvement in their singing. After lunch at the vicarage we set off on the four hour drive home. The ancient car is still running well, but we missed the air conditioning in the 35 degree heat. We were glad of a mostly restful day on Monday.

On Tuesday we set off for the clergy retreat, driving north from Ho along unmade roads full of ruts and puddles whose depth we never knew until our wheels were in them. Simon was taken to Kpando (pronounced "Pando") where he was to spend three days working with the choir there. After three hours we reached the rutted track which led steeply to the retreat centre in the mountains. At times the track was close to precipitous drops, and we were relieved to arrive safely.



Prince, a newly ordained deacon of very high calibre



All eleven clergy in the diocese, which is half the size of England, had gathered, and we got underway leading the retreat in the hot, airless seminar room: no air conditioning anywhere in the whole place. The Centre is located on land which two tribes have fought over for decades, and one

to be at home with the people, the place and task in hand. Before he left they were very keen that he should return.



night Jeanette heard gunfire, but we never really felt unsafe. David was joined in his room by a very large multi-coloured spider. It is the rainy season, so every afternoon there were violent thunderstorms and torrential rain, but these storms always cleared up in an hour.

In conversation with Bishop Matthias concerning help towards a more substantial car, we found ourselves discussing whether the money that currently is in the UK could be used as the down payment. We have begun to wonder if a group of Ho supporters would be willing to commit themselves to a small amount each month which, together, could cover the instalments. Already two or three of us have declared ourselves prepared to make such a commitment. Might there be others in various places and parishes around the country?

The days were long, beginning with morning prayer at 6.30 a.m. and ending with Night Prayers at 9.00 p.m. All of the services were led by ourselves, except for two of the Communion services. The clergy were receptive to our teaching material, although some were surprised to hear the idea that priests should spend time in daily prayer and Bible reading as well as doing the practical tasks of parish work! Jeanette's teaching on the Christian Healing Ministry went down extremely well, provoking much serious thought. As an example, we led a Healing Communion service in the chapel, using the same order of service used in our parish – we took enough copies for everyone, which they then kept. Some said they would begin using it in their own parishes. Jeanette ministered prayer with laying on of hands and anointing, and this in a diocese which doesn't ordain women! I got the impression that she made them really think about that issue.

We returned to the UK tired, but deeply satisfied with the visit and the work we had done. Simon Long is now turning the tracks he has recorded into a master for the production of a CD which we hope will sell for £10 each. We also felt content as to the work we have done in the parishes and especially during the retreat. Our addresses and the discussions which followed involved some heart searching and thought-provoking moments in which the clergy were reflecting deeply about their spiritual lives and the ministries they offered.

The return drive was long and over the highest mountain range in Ghana, and we were relieved that the car's brakes seemed to be working well this time. We saw some crazy overtaking on the steep road and hairpin bends and were glad to be back in the relative comfort of the hotel in Ho. Bishop Matthias asked Jeanette to preach in the Cathedral, probably the first female priest ever to do so. Simon recorded the combined choirs of the diocese and seemed



The choir which Simon recorded

David Reflects:

There is clearly a great deal more to do in supporting the diocese of Ho, and in terms of enabling the diocese to reach a point of greater self-sufficiency. Whether that will ever be possible whilst the diocese continues to embrace a form of church which requires a very high level of overseas resources, is a matter for future exploration. In that respect, our colonial forebears did not do the Ghanaian church any favours. I suspect that transition to an alternative pattern of church life which can be more self-sustaining would be difficult, although that is clearly a model which was St. Paul's consistent pattern of mission and church planting. Also as the finances of the church in the western world continue to be under pressure, it may well be that the resources to support the current pattern of church life in Ghana may gradually decline, thereby increasing the pressure for the Ghanaian church to embrace a pattern of life which can be self-sustaining.

Note: David is the Link Officer for the Deanery of Portsmouth. Jeanette was formerly Chaplain at Queen Alexandra Hospital. Simon Long is a music and choir teacher, and director of the Fine Voice Academy, based in Portsmouth.



It's special for us to know that we are part of a global family

The Anglican Church in Ghana is supporting communities through its Poverty Alleviation Project, which receives funding from USPG.

Joseph, one of the project's beneficiaries, says "I live in a village called Benim. I'm married with three children, aged 6 to 15. I'm a catechist in the local Anglican church and a vegetable farmer.

I'm very pleased that I have learned how to grow vegetables all year around, in the dry season as well as the rainy season. I have found a way to draw water from the river so I can water the plants in the dry season. I mostly grow okra and peppers. I was helped by the Poverty Alleviation Project. Last year I received a small loan which I used to buy a hose pipe so I could pump water through to my farm. This changed everything!

Before we had to fetch water in buckets, which took a long time and meant we could only water a small area of land. But now I'm able to water a much larger area. We've been able to increase our harvests and we're earning more money, which has brought our financial problems under control.

Before I was growing and selling about one basket of vegetables a week. But now I have more land and can sell seven baskets a week. The project also taught me how to handle money. I used to keep my money at home, but now I save it in the credit union. I've already paid off the original loan. At my church the congregation has seen the change in my life and this is encouraging them to explore what they can do. It's slow progress but they are building up their experience as they go.

Also, because I'm now able to bring in more income for my family, I no longer rely on the tithes of my congregation, which means I'm no longer a burden to them. This is like Paul's advice when he describes how he worked day and night in order not to be a financial burden on the churches where he preached. It's very special for us to know this project has the involvement of the worldwide Anglican Communion. It reminds us that we're part of one global family."

