

**Archbishop's Opening Speech at the 2008 Round Table**  
**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, Juba**

My Lord Bishops, partners, ladies and gentlemen I greet you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I would like to warmly welcome each and every one of you gathered here today. I also specifically thank the partners of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan for staying with us throughout the long years of war and for all your assistance, both spiritual and financial, over the years. I acknowledge the presence of, and heartily thank the following: the Diocese of Salisbury, the Episcopal Church of the United States, Episcopal Relief and Development, the Diocese of Bradford, the Church Mission Society, the American Friends of the ECS, the Anglican Church of Canada, Tearfund and the Sudan Church Association.

Friends, we gather here this week to discuss not only the state of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan, but the way forward for the Church. As a new Archbishop with ten years of service stretching before me I look to the future. The future of both the ECS and of the Sudan as a nation. We stand at a critical point in this nation's history. Next year, 2009, will see elections that will determine the look of a government that will guide us toward 2011, when the people of Southern Sudan will vote on whether they wish to remain within a united Sudan or secede as an independent country.

The ECS is the largest indigenous civil society organisation in the Sudan and therefore has a crucial role to play in the next few years of this nation's history. However, in recent years the Church has become too small minded, too inward looking and too divided along tribal lines to be an effective player in today's Sudan and the modern world. My vision of the ECS in ten years time is of an outward and forward looking Church – self sustainable yes, but interdependently part of the worldwide Anglican Communion and the Holy Catholic Church as a whole. We must plan ahead, engage with others and share our thoughts – only then will the ECS be truly able to fulfil the mandate God has given us to minister to His people in the Sudan.

To be fully able to reach such a level, the Church must tackle the twelve pressing problems that I outlined in my speech to the Salisbury ECS Partners' Conference in July this year:

1. **PROVINCIAL ARREARS:** The Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan has inherited arrears and unpaid incentives for staff of the province in Juba and Khartoum, which now total over \$157,000. These arrears need to be cleared as soon as possible so as to allow streamlining of the provincial work-force and a higher level of morale and output in the province. Provision must also be found for sustaining the required staff with no further arrears. I refer partners to my recent appeal on this matter, and thank the Diocese of Chicago's "Club 157" and Barnabus Fund for their current assistance for ECS debt relief.

2. **COMMUNICATION FOR THE OFFICE OF ARCHBISHOP**

Communication remains a major challenge in Sudan. The Province lacks effective communication systems and needs modern equipment to be able to communicate effectively both with the dioceses and internationally. The installation of internet in the provincial office this August – for which my thanks go to the Diocese of Virginia and Trinity Parish New York – shows rapid progress on this issue. Increased reporting has also been made a reality through the appointment of Nicholas

Ramsden as my International Co-ordinator. However, I am still without a vehicle for vital pastoral visits to the dioceses.

### **3. PROVINCIAL OFFICE REFURBISHMENT**

No major refurbishment has taken place since the Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan was created in 1976. New furniture is needed as well as overdue repairs and refurbishment.

### **4. EVANGELISM**

For the Gospel to be preached to the whole Sudan, evangelism needs to be strengthened and supported. Expanding the work of evangelism will make the Church rich in its harvest and able to reach other parts of Sudan and beyond. The Evangelism Commission needs to develop equipment to support such activities, including sound systems, a generator and vehicle for reaching the different centres.

### **5. PEACE-BUILDING, RECONCILIATION AND ADVOCACY**

The civil war in Sudan has caused trauma to thousands of people and had a serious effect on families and friends during the war. The ECS Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission has been holding workshops in many different parts of the Sudan to enlighten communities and help them move from a culture of war towards building peace with one another. There is an urgent need to intensify these activities, and I appeal directly to partners to lobby their governments for further support to the peace process in Sudan. We must not let this country return to war for all of our sakes and the Church has and can play a vital role in peace-building work so long as it gets the support to do so.

### **6. REHABILITATION AND RELIEF FOR IDPs AND RETURNEES**

Over the last 22 years, our people have fled as refugees to all our neighbouring countries and beyond. Sudan has also experienced major internal displacement of our populations, from the South, North and East. More recently, huge numbers have been displaced and rendered homeless in the region of Darfur and in Abyei. The Church has a major part to play in helping to rehabilitate returnees, including those now returning from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt, Congo and Central African Republic. Such care sets a good example and is a practical demonstration of the Gospel message.

### **7. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY**

In terms of food production, Sudan could be a bread basket for the whole of Africa. Our God-given land is rich in both minerals and agricultural soil. Rainfall is up to 60 inches per year but we lack equipment, modern farming techniques and seeds. Conservation of the environment is important for the future. We would welcome overseas volunteers with professional expertise to help the Church to develop appropriate modern farming techniques and educate local farmers. Already the Governor of Western Equatoria has promised us land in her state for agriculture and I have appointed Ms. Robin Denney, an agriculturalist from the Episcopal Church of the United States, to be the ECS External Agricultural Consultant. She will be

assisting us in developing an ECS Agriculture Office and in piloting agriculture projects.

## 8. EDUCATION

Throughout the history of ECS, the Church has been at the forefront of developing education policy. Education remains a central element of the Church's mission and is critical for the future of the nation. The ECS Education Commission has established policies for primary schools and for teacher training, as well as seeking to encourage secondary and technical / vocational education. ECS is one of the major providers of education, especially in Southern Sudan, and has channeled over \$1 million of international donor money into the education sector over the past two years. Recently the services of Dr. Margaret Griffin have been secured to assess a possible ECS collaboration with the widow of the late Dr. John Garang, Madam Rebecca Garang, in running a boarding school and teacher training centre in New Site on the Kenyan border. However, Sudanese educational needs extend far beyond this – ECS has proven capacity to deliver on education, so I appeal for your further support here.

## 9. HEALTH

ECS has established a Commission for Health and HIV/AIDS. The level of healthcare available inside Sudan is minimal, particularly in the South. With the help of partners, particularly the Salisbury Medical Link whom I thank very heartily, ECS dioceses have been able to offer some basic primary health care, but the needs are enormous. Diseases prevalent in Sudan such as HIV/AIDS and Malaria have become of global concern, and the Church needs to take a lead in their prevention. My dream is to have 4 ECS hospitals in the country, in the North, Bahr El-Ghazal, Upper Nile and Equatoria. Lui Hospital will be the one for Equatoria, but is currently in a terrible state and needs a lot of work.

## 10. CAPACITY BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

21 years of war in Sudan have been a tremendous setback for the availability of educated and trained personnel, both to serve as leaders of the church and in other disciplines. ECS has suffered from this lack of leadership skills as has every walk of life. There is an important need now to take training seriously to overcome this gap. The top ECS priorities are:

- **Theological training** – hundreds of priests have been ordained with no theological training and many cannot even celebrate Holy Communion.
- **General capacity building for leaders** – basic management skills are sorely lacking at every level, especially financial management skills.
- **Development training for parishes, dioceses, and the Provincial staff** – ECS needs to learn how to help itself, and you, the partners, are in a position to teach us in order to avert a crisis of capacity.

## 11. RECONSTRUCTION OF CHURCHES

Most of the churches in Sudan were burnt down during the civil war. There is a need to rebuild churches and dioceses. Samaritan's Purse is the only organization which has volunteered to rebuild some of the churches. This can be done by local Christian communities who provide bricks, timbers and the labour force as shown by the IDP

congregations of Eastern Equatoria. Support is still needed and I look towards CMS and SCA to come in on this work.

## 12. PROFESSIONAL MISSION PERSONNEL

The Episcopal Church of the Sudan is requesting you to help train our people in the different disciplines needed to address our needs and equip the Church in its mission. We need professional expertise, such as teachers, agriculturalists, nurses, doctors, and other technical experts. If you can send anything, send a person, not money. Money can be diverted, wasted and badly spent, but a committed expert individual can help to teach others and set up systems that will last a lifetime.

I, as Archbishop, am serious about addressing all of these issues in the next ten years. If you choose to work together with me to address them you have my full guaranteed support. As evidence of this I put before you key recent leaps forward that have already occurred since my enthronement:

- A consolidated financial report assisted by an ECS External Financial Consultant
- A draft 2009 budget
- Internet in the provincial office and soon in the dioceses
- A draft Provincial Strategic Plan
- Reporting on my visits, thoughts and decisions by my International Co-ordinator
- Plans in place to clear arrears
- Plans in place for an Agriculture Office and the appointment of an ECS External Agricultural Consultant
- An Interim Financial Policy to guarantee departmental accountability, financial management and planning at the provincial level, copies of which are available.

The most pressing strategic priorities are the clearing of provincial arrears and the setting up of efficient provincial management systems staffed by motivated, paid, professional personnel. Only through this can the ECS start to grow again as an institution, playing the crucial role that it can in the next few years of our nation's history and giving full glory to God.

I therefore challenge each of my brothers and sisters here to pledge your agency's support to these ECS strategic priorities this week. Work with me to build God's Church here in the Sudan. Alone we can achieve nothing, but together in the love of Christ, anything is possible. In keeping with this sentiment I would like to take this opportunity to remind the Diocese of Salisbury of their agreement to link up our 24 dioceses with their rural deaneries in order to forge closer links between Christians in England and the Sudan. I ask them to continue to pursue this.

Only through real, personal, two-way partnership can we begin understand each other and to work most effectively together for Christ's Kingdom.

Thank you very much and may God bless you all.

**The Most Rev. Dr. Daniel Deng Bul Yak**

Archbishop and Primate of the Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan