

Bishop Malcolm writes...



Dear friends,

Back in July my wife Pam and I visited Burundi for a week – this was a long planned visit during which we had the joy of catching up with our Burundian foster son, who lived with us when he was at University in Durham, and attending the blessing of his marriage in the beautiful shell of an unfinished church building in a village in Bubanza. Burundi is a small country of hills and valleys, not unlike Derbyshire in that respect. It is a beautiful country with a rich cultural heritage, but a traumatic recent history and persistent poverty on a scale not seen elsewhere.

While we were there we were also able to follow up conversations at the Lambeth Conference last year, where Bishop Eraste shared with us some of the diocese of Bujumbura's journey, and its amazing work in mission and transformation amongst some of the world's most deprived communities. Ben our foster son had also got us involved in a trust supporting Bujumbura Christian University, so we spent some time visiting students and staff there. We were struck by the huge demands on students training for mission and ministry in a context where resources are so limited and challenges are so great. They are responding to the call of God with real vision for the future of their country, for justice, for peace, and for economic sustainability.

I owe it to my late Uncle Alastair, a former USPG missionary in North India, before he came home to be chaplain at Derby Royal Infirmary, that I have from childhood always been intrigued by what it means to be part of a world wide family in Jesus Christ. Apart from his own visits, a steady stream of ordinands, clergy, and bishops from Chota Nagpur used to come and stay in our home in

Northumberland, making a huge impression on me. Later on unsurprisingly this led me to an overseas gap year, where in Kenya I found a church of all ages vibrant with faith, hope, and love in the context of their country's all too slow emergence from extreme poverty. The wealth of their spiritual and cultural heritage has always had a huge impact on me.

Returning from Burundi I am now more than ever convinced that belonging to a global church is an essential part of the good news we have in Jesus Christ. The fact that we belong together – with all our differences and different contexts, is no accident. Humanity is fragile - facing existential challenges fuelled by climate change, inequality, and persistent conflict. More than ever we need the grace and power of God working in all of us, working together globally to address our global challenges. Seeking God's coming Kingdom – a world made new.

I am delighted that Bishop Libby has chosen to make her Harvest Appeal for 'Trees for Life Burundi'. This gives us an opportunity both to work in partnership on one of our diocesan priorities whilst also learning from the generous faith, courageous hope, and life-giving love so evident in our Burundian sisters and brothers. I am sure it will help us explore more and more what it is to be disciples of Jesus Christ together in today's world – among the cities, hills, and valleys of Derbyshire as much as among the cities, hills and valleys of Burundi.

Bishop Malcolm

Rt Revd Malcolm Macnaughton
Bishop of Repton