

Team members reflect on time in South Sudan

It was such a privilege to visit the charming people of South Sudan – they may be impoverished physically but certainly not spiritually. Their dependence on God and their love for Jesus had much to teach me about gratitude and joy.

Life is hard for them but God is their provider and strength as they take responsibility for their most basic of needs. Not once did anyone bother us looking for handouts nor did I hear a child cry or argue with its mother.

Rev Andrew Sweeney

The visit was very fulfilling because I was able to achieve some effective teaching of small group education methods to healthcare staff and nursing students. The staff at the Martha Primary Care Clinic welcomed the ideas I was proposing for setting up an on-going education meeting. The County Health Office will extend the principles of the group to the other primary care units in Yei County if this proves to be popular and useful.

The fellowship of our diocesan team was a spiritually enlivening process, with morning and evening prayers and sharing of experiences each day.

Dr Frank Dobbs

This opportunity has been incredible but I wonder how I can put into words what I have seen and shared. I think it is part of the mystery, you can hear stories and share photographs and in some way try to understand, but is only in being there that you can really experience it.

People with very, very little, but with everything I strive for. Smiles, joy, peace and grace. I have so much to learn from their outlook and from their utter dependence on God. People for whom your very 'being there' was all that mattered. People who will have a special place in my heart forever.

Judith Cairns

The great characteristics I saw in the people of Yei were faith, determination and joy - their faith is an inspiration. In every time of worship they proclaim: "God is good all the time" and this belief and trust in the Lord flows through their lives.

They are determined to build new communities with good schools, improved health care and vibrant churches and they are undertaking the great challenges they face with a depth of joy in their lives and in their worship that really did my heart good!

Canon Sam Wright

From getting onto the coach to Dublin Airport, this team was like a tight-fitting jigsaw. META stands for Mission Experience Team Abroad, and one of the main objectives is that the team has a positive engaging experience visiting a CMS Ireland Global Partner.

The team worked exceptionally well together, supporting and being there for each other, laughing and crying together, praying and fellowshiping together, enjoying each other's company, worshipping and dancing together and ministering to one another. We experienced a genuine communion that truly fitted together like a jigsaw.

We became close and God used us in unimaginable ways, but the experience we come away from Yei with is one we will not easily forget and one in which we were unfathomably blessed.

David Gough, CMSI



Partnership was reaffirmed and relationships strengthened when a team from Connor visited Yei Diocese, South Sudan, in January.

The team was led by David Gough of CMS Ireland, who facilitated the trip. It included the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; Archdeacon Stephen Forde, rector of Larne; Canon Sam Wright, rector of Lisburn Cathedral; the Rev Andrew Sweeney, rector of Ballymoney; Dr Frank Dobbs, Agherton Parish; Judith Cairns, Lisburn Cathedral, and Diocesan Communications Officer Karen Bushby.

They were warmly welcomed by Bishop Hilary Luete Adeba of Yei and his diocesan team. Connor has been in partnership with Yei since 2006 and since then a number of teams have visited Sudan.

This new country is emerging from decades of war. The second Sudanese civil war, which ended with the signing of a peace agreement in 2005, lasted more than 20 years, with the loss of 1.9 million civilian lives. Over four million were forced to flee their homes to bordering countries like Kenya and Uganda, while others survived in the massive Sudanese bush.

Since 2005 many have returned to their homes and the population of Yei rocketed from 50,000 six years ago to an estimated 185,000 in 2011 when the south finally achieved its independence.

There are signs of progress everywhere. The hospital now has doctors, three years ago it had none, there are banks which actually hold cash, everyone has a mobile phone and many are anxious to share their email addresses. There is a new Post Office, but ironically no postal service! We learn that malnutrition no longer exists in rural Yei, and the market, which three years ago was bare, is bursting with the most wonderful fruit and vegetables. Soldiers are rarely to be seen but scavenging Black Kites are common.

The ECS Guesthouse has built more bedrooms and meeting rooms. It even has an internet connection. The town is bustling and the shops are overflowing. Frank even spotted an ice cream seller on a bicycle! Children can be seen eating crisps and guzzling fizzy drinks. Motorbikes are plentiful and in the countryside small enterprises are taking shape.

In the village of Longamere, for example, David and Judith met former politician and village elder Manoah, who decided to support his underpaid local clergy, not with money, but with seeds. During the first year he gave each rector 50 Matoki



A girl carries a little baby in Mongo village.

Connor team's joy-filled visit reaffirms partnership with Yei

seedlings, in year two he gave them each five avocado seeds. The result was clergy were able to feed themselves and their extended families.

But change is slow. There has been little or no investment in roads and as long as they remain in their potholed state development of infrastructure will be difficult. In the countryside children wear clothes donated to charity shops in the developed world, their feet are often bare. They eat cassava and maize, goat and scrawny chicken. They have improvised toys and only half of the children in South Sudan go to school.

In Yei electricity is provided by a generator, which shuts down from midnight to 7am.

But this diocese has one wonderful resource – its beautiful people. And it was building relationships with these proud and faithful people that the Connor team most delighted in.

In the course of seven days in Yei they visited the various institutions run by the diocese, including the Martha Clinic with its new children's ward and eye clinic, and the Vocational Training College (VTC).

They prayed together daily under a mango tree in the gardens of the ECS Guesthouse,

and there were many moments of fun and laughter as the team bonded and worked together.

A new Partnership Agreement was signed by the two Bishops, formally extending the Connor Yei link for a further five years at Yei Diocesan Synod, where Bishop Alan was guest preacher.

During the trip GP Dr Frank Dobbs held a number of meetings at Yei Hospital, and ran training sessions for local nurses and staff of the Martha Clinic. Some team members had a tour of Yei Hospital.

A key task for the team was delivering training to pastors from parishes in and around the large Yei Diocese. Sessions were held in the very African surroundings of a communal tukul, or payot, and were led by Stephen, Bishop Alan, Andrew and Sam, while Judith, a parishioner at Lisburn Cathedral and Chief Executive of the Waringstown-based Love for Life, delivered training specific to youth leaders. There was much singing and dancing as well as focused learning and meaningful prayer over the two days.

The team had a heartening meeting with representatives of Yei Mothers Union,

and on the Sunday preached in different churches around the diocese.

A visit to Mongo village where Connor funded the new primary school was a joyous occasion, with the community turning out in force to welcome the visitors and express their thanks to the people of Northern Ireland.

The team were also guests at a dinner hosted by Bishop Hilary at his home, and one unplanned but very rewarding event was an invitation to address a week-long youth camp taking place in the carpentry warehouse at the VTC.

Bishop Alan, Judith, Andrew and Sam delivered four short talks which enthused and inspired the 300 strong audience of young people from across the diocese, and on what was their last night in Yei the team all joined in lively worship to a fantastic African beat!

We hope the reports and photographs in this mission-focused Connor Connections will give readers some insight into the Diocese of Yei and its beautiful people. For more pictures please visit the Photo Gallery on the Connor website: www.connor.anglican.org

Agreement signed for five more years

An agreement to extend the partnership between the dioceses of Connor and Yei was formally signed by the two Bishops at the Yei Diocesan Synod.

The extension for a further five years was approved at Connor Synod in October.

In his lengthy 'Charge' on the opening day of Yei Synod, Bishop Hilary said the essence of partnership was prayer, practical aspects in terms of provision of material things like funds for development, and exchange visits which encouraged the partnership to move forward.

Bishop Alan preached at the Synod opening service when each team member was warmly welcomed. Greeting delegates, the Rev Andrew Sweeney expressed envy of the singing and dancing as well as the cathedral's technology!

In his address Bishop Hilary said the Diocese of Yei covered 11,274 square kms. It is made up of six archdeaconries, 63 parishes and is served by 105 pastors.

This was the first Synod since South Sudan gained its independence in July 2011. Bishop Hilary said that since then the situation had changed from uncertainty following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement [2005], to expectation.

"We are yet expecting to achieve full security for the citizens of this nation, strong Christian communities transformed from within, development in the form of provision of essential services such as

schools, health care, clean drinking water, good roads, enhanced agriculture for sustainable food security, reduced poverty levels and the emancipation of the freedom of the citizens," he told Synod.

He urged delegates to pray "that God will give us the peace we desire and a... better future for our children."

Yei Synod ran over three days and looked at the usual issues including administration, budget, church and society. Peace building and reconciliation were also on the agenda, as was the Constitution. Bishop Alan joined the debates when he was available, and with his support Bishop Hilary was able to achieve approval of a Constitution.

The Synod and the signing of the Partnership Agreement attracted attention from the local media. Reporters Daniel from the 'New Nation' newspaper and Alfred from 'South Sudan Today' interviewed both Bishops and Archdeacon Stephen Forde about the Agreement.

"Since independence we can cover anything," Alfred explained. "For a long time Yei did not have any newspapers because so many people could not read and write, but in the last four years more people are wanting to access information." The interviews were also broadcast on the local Spirit Radio.



Bishop Hilary addresses Yei Synod.



Bishop Alan at the top table.



Music from Mothers' Union Synod delegates.



There is more dancing than at Connor Synod! Christmas decorations still hang in many churches.



Delegates on their feet during Bishop Alan's sermon on the opening day of Yei Synod.



Reporters Daniel and Alfred get the story.



The Bishops sign the new Partnership Agreement, or 'Memo of Understanding,' in Immanuel Cathedral.



Mum Joyce and her baby boy, just four days old.

Smiles and signs of hope at Yei Hospital

Yei Hospital is still a depressing place. We were forbidden to photograph the dishevelled wards, where patients lie in grotty, mismatched sheets, paint peeling off the walls.

But there are signs of progress. Three years ago this was a hospital with no doctors. Today, there are six doctors, eight clinical officers and 49 nurses.

In medical wards patients are being treated for illnesses such as malaria, pneumonia and dysentery, burns and fractures. But there is a shortage of mosquito nets, mattresses and bed pans.

In the sleeping sickness ward one little girl dozes, recovering from an infection that attacks the internal organs after a bite from a Tsetse Fly.

There is a sense of organisation to this hospital that wasn't here before.

In the children's ward we meet Nura, one of nine children's nurses. There is no money for uniforms. Medicines come in from the Government every three months, but Nura says it is not always enough.

A smiling Josephine feeds her newborn twins in the maternity unit. Sadly before we leave Josephine learns she needs a blood transfusion. There is no blood bank, the blood will have to be donated by a relative.

There are three midwives in the hospital, and caesarean sections can be carried out. There are other signs of progress, a new building for leprosy, sleeping sickness and TB patients, the ART centre for Aids/HIV patients looks quiet, incidences of Aids/HIV are low in South Sudan. A new training centre is under construction.

Frank learns that the Yei National Health Training Institute has seven lecturers, six more than when he last visited in 2010, and a full intake of student nurses, midwives and laboratory assistants. Here Frank gave a talk on small group learning.

The County Health Office has trained Traditional Birth Attendants and Community Health Advisers who provide basic health services in villages. There are now three primary care doctors in the area.

The Martha Clinic, run by Yei Diocese, saw 24,000 patients last year. "There is no other health centre in South Sudan that sees that number of patients, even the Government hospitals," Bishop Hilary says proudly.



Frank delivers a training session on small group learning at the Martha Clinic. Frank was promoting small group learning as an economic and effective way of continuing professional education.



Inside the busy children's ward at Martha Primary Care Clinic.

Martha runs a clinic in Lanya and a mobile clinic which visits rural villages. £35,000 is needed to keep the mobile clinic running for the next year.

In July 2010, a Connor team opened the new children's ward at the Martha Clinic. The unit has nine beds. Today it is busy. "We have almost run out of space," says Bishop Hilary. "Hundreds of children suffer illnesses like malaria and acute bronchitis. If they are brought here their survival rate is very, very good because the staff are doing such a good job." Adjacent to the children's ward is an eye clinic.

In Yei, Frank met with the Medical Director of the hospital, the Director of the Health Training Institute and the County Health Officer. He delivered training at the hospital on Peptic Ulcers and Diarrhoea and Malaria. He also gave a presentation on small group learning at the Martha Clinic, and visited a private hospital outside Yei.

Yei is a fertile land, many of its people are subsistence farmers. "A survey of malnutrition found that there was none in the countryside," said Frank. "But many children living in Yei are malnourished because there are not enough jobs and their parents live in poverty."



The joy of the occasion is obvious in this lady's face.



Younger pupils at Mongo Primary School sing a welcome.

A warm w gracious

The people of Mongo turned out in force to greet the Connor team when they visited the school built with funding from this diocese.

Among the welcoming faces were three the Connor group was especially delighted to see. Timothy, Moses and Isaac, all teachers at Mongo Primary, trained at Yei Teacher Training College thanks to financing from the parishes of Larne, Agherton and Lisburn Cathedral.

So it was with real joy that Archdeacon Stephen Forde, rector of Larne, met with Moses; Canon Sam Wright, rector of Lisburn Cathedral, exchanged handshakes with Timothy, and Dr Frank Dobbs from Agherton said hello to Isaac.

After the 16 mile drive along a dusty rutted road, which to be fair has improved since three years ago, the team was greeted by a large crowd singing and dancing its welcome.

These people waited patiently while the team were treated to refreshments in the parish payot, and again raised their voices in song when the team rejoined them.

After a welcome from Archdeacon Jackson Duku of Mongo, Bishop Hilary addressed the crowd which included pupils in uniform, toddlers, MU ladies, the parish youth group,



A face full of character.



Bishop Alan and Frank get the Mongo community singing!



The team with members of Mongo Parish youth group who fondly recalled the visit by a young team from Lisburn Cathedral in 2011.



Under the shade of the mango trees David, Andrew, Judith, Sam and Stephen listen to the speeches.



Cheeky smiles from these ladies!



With Bishop Alan is Mongo pupil Nathan Mawa who made a speech thanking Connor for his school.



Andrew presents gifts from Ballymoney Parish to the Deputy Head Jumo Simon Elizara.



Mongo parish youth group performs for the visitors.



Frank exchanges an African handshake with Isaac, whose training was supported by Agherton parish.



Teachers Isaac, Moses and Timothy, whose training was funded by Connor parishes, with some of the Mongo pupils.



Stephen gets to know Moses, whose training was funded by Larne Parish. David captures the moment!



The colourful procession which greeted the visitors makes its way to Mongo School.



Judith gets to know new friends!

welcome from the people of Mongo

and many older members of the community, including the wonderful Boma Chief who has not aged a day since our visits in 2010!

A wonderful moment came when Nathan Mawa, a P7 pupil, stepped forward to speak. "We the pupils of Mongo Primary School extend our happiness to the people of Northern Ireland because they made us go to study in a standard classroom," he said in English. "These classrooms will stay for very many years, even our grand grandchildren will also study here. We thank them 100 times."

Thanking his teachers, Nathan added: "They really struggled very much. They made us to pass every year very well."

Just how well Mongo school is doing was revealed in a presentation by Deputy Head Juma Simon Elizara. The school has 359 pupils, six government teachers, six volunteer or community teachers, four newly trained teachers from the Teacher Training College, including the three supported by Connor parishes, and three non teaching staff.

The pass rate at P7 was 85 per cent in 2010, 91.3 per cent in 2011 and last year 95 per cent of all P7 pupils passed their exams. "Mongo Primary School is regarded as number one out of all the schools in Ootogo Payam," Juma said proudly.

The school has 13 PTA members, and seven Senior Management Committee members. "These groups work hand in hand with the school administration which has really increased the pupils' general performances," he said.

But Jumo highlighted challenges ahead, including poor payment of teachers and a lack of equipment such as computers, printers, photocopiers, even desks, cupboards and bookshelves. He was delighted with a gift of notebooks and pens brought by the Rev Andrew Sweeney from the parishioners of Ballymoney.

Thanking Bishop Alan and the Connor team, the Boma Chief said: "There has never been a day like this in Mongo before and that is thanks to you Bishop, and thanks to all the people in Ireland."

Pupils from Mongo Primary school sang a song, and members of the youth group, who had become good friends with a team from Lisburn Cathedral which spent several days in Mongo in 2011, put on a display of music, dance and drama.

Bishop Alan and CMSI's David Gough spoke on behalf of the visitors, and the Bishop had everyone singing yet again, before a late lunch and the bumpy road back to Yei.



These young people are intrigued by the team's desire to take photographs of them.



The village elders dance their welcome.



Young people sing and dance in procession.



The Boma Chief points to the school as he expresses the community's thanks to Connor Diocese.



Two gentlemen listen with interest at Mongo school.



The gift of learning. In front of Mongo Primary School are team members with Bishop Hilary, Deputy Head Jumo and Isaac, Timothy, Moses, the three teachers trained by Connor Parishes.

Positive response from local pastors

“The diocese is 60 miles that way and 45 miles that way and this training session has brought us together as priests. I hope my special friends from Connor will come back and give us training in the practical part of life and management and leadership skills.”

Rev Satima Bida Abraham



“I learned more things so I can deliver the original message of God to the people in my parish. If God wills it this team will come back to tell us more so we understand more.”

Rev Seme Remo Satimon, above

“I learned a lot about the Book of Nehemiah which gave me courage for being faithful despite the challenges we face in the church and in ministry. Judith’s sessions on youth leadership will really help us to reach out to young people and make them come into our church. Our young people need to have hope in their lives.”

Rev Gismala Beneth

“The sessions were very good. I got some skills for leading my church.”

Rev Simon Sandega



We introduced Pastor Samuel, above, in Connor Connections three years ago when we learned he was training to be a dentist. He now runs a small practice at his church. He told Andrew that while an American had taught him how to drill teeth, God had taught him to fill teeth! Thankfully none of the team had toothache in Yei!

Samuel said: “I enjoyed the teaching and the team’s style of teaching, especially the bible studies on Nehemiah, the fun and the questions.”

Rev Samuel Zagba



Rev Andrew Sweeney speaks about sustaining a healthy spirit.



Judith gets the youth leaders ready for action!



Two little girls stop by to see what is going on.



Bishop Alan has the pastors holding up their shields.



Andrew prays with local pastors, and, inset, a lady pastor beautifully dressed for training.



Trainee Mary takes her chances on the clingfilm chair during one of Judith’s sessions for youth leaders.

Relationship teaching goes down with a bang!

Never work with children, animals or... balloons – at least not if the temperature is in the high 30s!

Chief Executive of Love for Live, Judith Cairns, refused to be deflated when the balloons she had brought to demonstrate how to make a chair popped soon after inflation on the afternoon of her second training session for youth leaders.

Undaunted, Judith helped her avid trainees to successfully make a chair fit to hold the weight of the Rev Andrew Sweeney from nothing but clingfilm! And local children playing nearby had an explosive time with the remaining balloons.

Judith led two sessions for youth leaders, as well as contributing to the training sessions delivered by other members of the Connor team. She focused on issues common to all young people, whether they live in Northern Ireland or South Sudan.

These included identity, value and selfworth, understanding what pressures young people and youth leaders face, and the importance of building

strong healthy relationships.

Judith, whose suitcase was tipping the scales rather dramatically at the airport, produced a variety of aids to share with the youth leaders, introducing games that would inspire young people and teach them a lesson at the same time. Some required no actual materials – catch me when I fall backwards, as showcased by Stephen and Andrew, a perfect demonstration of trust.

Over the two days, Judith developed a close relationship with her group, it was wonderful to see some of the young women in particular blossom as their confidence grew. One penned a short letter asking ‘Miz Judith’ to be her penpal.

Judith’s empathy with young people was clearly demonstrated when she preached at the Youth Camp on the team’s last night in Yei. Each young person would have left that night knowing they were unique and perfect in God’s sight.

Find out more about Love for Life at www.loveforlife.org.uk.



Canon Sam Wright gets ready to deliver his training.



Pastors take in what Bishop Alan says.



The payot hums as pastors and the Connor team pray for each other. CMSI's David Gough is pictured.



One young pastor raises her shield.



Archdeacon Stephen Forde delivers training on Nehemiah as Judith looks on.



The payot at the Vocational Training College where the Connor team delivered their training sessions.

Training worth a song and a dance

It would be fair to say that it was with some trepidation that the Connor team set out on their first training day for pastors of Yei Diocese.

Their carefully planned three day schedule had been cut to two at the last minute and the venue identified for their sessions was a dark, dusty, disused room.

A new venue had quickly been identified – a payot, or large tukul with half walls, in the grounds of the Vocational Training Centre, - with the first session getting underway on Friday, not Wednesday as had been planned. With so many changes would anyone turn up?

So it was with great joy and not a small amount of thanksgiving that the Connor team watched the pastors, male and female, of varying ages, stroll up to the payot that first morning. There were 35 from across Yei Diocese, a perfect number.

After asking the pastors to switch off their mobile phones (really!) Archdeacon Stephen Forde welcomed the trainees, encouraging them to introduce themselves and tell everyone their favourite food. Beans, cassava and chicken were high on the list – no burgers or vindaloos here!

Stephen based his teachings on Nehemiah, drawing parallels to the situation past and present in South Sudan. Many of those present had spent the civil war either in exile or hiding in the bush. They are all faced with the task of rebuilding their homeland. Stephen also gave a talk on preparing for a bible study, helping the group prepare a bible study on Nehemiah 9.

After lunch the Rev Andrew Sweeney

spoke about sustaining a healthy spirit, using Rembrandt's painting *The Return of the Prodigal Son* to illustrate his talk and encourage input from the pastors.

This session opened with a duet of 'Rejoice' by Bishop Alan and Andrew, with the pastors needing no encouragement to get to their feet and join in. Bishop Alan then requested the local pastors lead the Connor team in singing and the payot resounded with joyful praise.

The second day's training sessions were kicked off by Canon Sam Wright on the topic of Galatians. The afternoon session was led by Bishop Alan, who reflected on the story of the return of the prodigal. It was clear that many of the trainees were bemused and delighted to see a real Bishop singing and dancing and generally having fun with them as well as imparting words they all found so helpful.

There was much joy and laughter over the two days. But there were serious moments too, when some of the group spoke of the horrors they had experienced during the civil war. The Connor team was aware how privileged they were to hear people speak of horrors they might never have shared openly before.

In small groups the pastors and team members prayed for each other, the payot literally humming with murmured prayers. The voices grew louder, pain of a tortured past, hope for the future, the prayers more fervent as the voices floated heavenwards through the payot's open walls.



Judith with members of Yei Mothers' Union

MU are 'backbone of the church'

They had had a long day at Diocesan Synod but members of Yei Mothers' Union were happy to give up their evening to meet with the Connor team.

They spoke about the work they do untiringly for the women and families of this scattered diocese. Bishop Alan thanked them for their ministry, saying they were the backbone of the church.

Co-ordinator Mary Gboka Soloman outlined the objectives of Yei MU, namely stressing the importance of marriage in church; encouraging parents to bring up their children in the church; helping them to work using their hands; giving comfort to widows and helping women in difficult marriages.

The Yei branch has 30 women trained to raise HIV/Aids awareness in parishes, and it transports pregnant women to town for ante-natal services, and trains Traditional Birthing Attendants (TBAs) to offer ante-natal treatment in rural areas. "Thankfully the child mortality rate is decreasing," Mary said. She added that lack of transport continued to hinder the work the MU does in rural areas.

They train women in crafts such as soap making, sewing and knitting, so they can set up small businesses. "Most have not gone to school. We teach them how to manage their money and how to add, subtract and divide using sticks and stones," said Mary.

The team presented the ladies with small gifts from Connor and Ballymoney MU.

Daria Kwaje, former MU co-ordinator in the provinces, said: "During the war some of us were in Khartoum, some in Juba and some in the bush. Like many others I have come back. This is my homeland. We are still trying to build ourselves so we can reach the level God wants us to reach. We need your prayers to build our strength. We are happy that the Mothers' Union in Connor does not forget us here in Yei."



Judith greets some of the smartly dressed students at Yei Teacher Training College.

Training people to rebuild South Sudan

Blacksmiths, tailors, cooks and teachers are all being trained in their professions in two wonderful enterprises only a few hundred metres from Yei Diocesan Office.

The church-run Vocational Training College, or VTC, trains young people from far flung villages in trades including car mechanics, carpentry and driving. Principal Joyce Sitima explained that courses now include blacksmithing, catering and tailoring.

Metal is widely used in doors, gates and decorative window security bars, so the fruits of the smiths' labour are evident.

The food served at the ECS Guesthouse had improved dramatically since visits by previous Connor teams because the chefs had completed the catering course.

Joyce explained that the VTC currently employs 18 staff, and 115 students graduated last year. On their last two evenings the team found themselves in the carpentry warehouse which had been transformed into the hub of a summer camp for 300 young people.

In the grounds of Yei Teacher Training College two three storey buildings rise impressively. The college is not church-run, but Bishop Hilary is chairman of the Board.

Principal James Kepo said a lot of effort had been invested in developing the college infrastructure. "Many country schools do not have enough teachers," said James. "We want to introduce a new course so we can train teachers to work in both primary and secondary schools."

James thanked CMSI and Connor for



Vocational Training College Principal Joyce Satima talks about the courses on offer to David and Stephen.

supporting the training of teachers. Agherton Parish sponsored a group of five teachers including Isaac; Larne supported Moses and Lisburn Cathedral supported Timothy. All three are now working in Mongo School and were there for the team visit to Mongo.

"Education in this country has traditionally been provided by church and this is still the same even after independence. This is the most successful teacher training college in South Sudan," said James.

"This country has come a long way and has a very painful history. We see this as an opportunity to train a new generation of teachers and leaders who will not only teach the children but will teach them about the love of Christ."

The college trains up to 300 teachers a year. Only 1.5 million of South Sudan's three million children attend school.

The team toured the complex, seeing the nearly complete female living block which will accommodate 144 students and is due to officially open in March, and the impressive Academic Tower with its state of the art science labs and computer suite.



The stunning scenery around Longamere.



Bishop Alan preaches in Yei Cathedral.



Members of Immanuel Cathedral Choir sing.

Privilege of sharing Sunday worship

Members of the Connor team were invited to preach at a number of different churches in Yei Diocese on Sunday January 20.

Bishop Alan preached in Immanuel Cathedral in Yei, Canon Sam Wright was in St Paul's Church, Archdeacon Stephen Forde was in Jigimoni Church, Rev Andrew Sweeney was in St Philip's, Dr Frank Dobbs was in the thatched Nyogwe Church and Judith Cairns and CMSI's David Gough were in Longamere Parish.

Welcoming Bishop Alan to the packed congregation at the 7.30am English language service in the Cathedral, Bishop Hilary said: "The partnership with Connor is very strong." Bishop Alan encouraged the congregation to join him in singing 'Rejoice,' before preaching on the Parable of the Sower. Later that morning he also preached at the Bari service.

In Longamere, 13 miles from Yei along a rutted dirt track road, Judith and David were greeted by Archdeacon Moses. Their climb to the impressive Longamere Church was a walk reminiscent of the wedding scene in *Mama Mia!*

Judith spoke about challenge, focusing on the story of David and Goliath. To the delight of the congregation, she showed everyone how to do a high five, a low five and for the little ones a baby five!

A moving moment occurred when one woman brought a basin of sorgum as her offering because she had no money.

David told parishioners: "We have come to meet you, greet you, dance with you, sing with you and worship with you. Partnership is relationship and as we get to know each other we understand what our needs are and how best to help each other."

Andrew's service in St Philip's lasted three hours! Andrew said afterwards. "It was a lovely service and my sermon was at the very end. It was the first time I have ever been interpreted, and I had to remember the key things I wanted to include."

Sam's first service in St Paul's was in English at 8am. The Bari service began at 10.15. "They had me up dancing and I got them to sing 'Walking in the Light of God,'" Sam said. "The children's choir were all in uniform with white shirts and cravats with a blue cross."

Frank, dressed in a lay reader's attire loaned to him by CMSI associate John Spens, said: "The thatched church was full, it was lovely and shady and there were lots of people looking in through the open windows. They followed the Prayer Book which they have been learning for five months."

Frank also preached at the Bari service where again there was plenty of dancing. "I must have had all the children attached to my hands at one stage," Frank laughed.



Following a reading in his Bible in Yei Cathedral.



A lady pastor who helped lead the Cathedral service.



Climbing up to Longamere Church.



Judith joins the dancing after preaching in Longamere.



Stephen outside Jigimoni Church where he preached.



David speaks about Partnership in Longamere.



Beautiful smiles in Longamere Church!