

Partnership in the Gospel reinforced by a trip to Tanzania

During February a team of 16 clergy and laity from the Diocese of Leeds spent two weeks travelling to and across the Mara region of Tanzania. The link between the Diocese of Leeds and the Dioceses of Mara, Rorya and Tarime in Anglican Province of Tanzania was formed 30+ years ago and exchange visits have been a key feature of the link since its inception. The trip provided a wonderful opportunity to be with Christians in a very different context to the one we experience in the UK; to witness the ways in which community development and evangelism work together; and to learn something of the challenges faced by those living and working in East Africa.



“Travelling to Africa is about seeing and believing in all that God is doing across the world and strengthening the bonds of friendship that hold the Anglican Communion together.”

Canon Hilary Barber, Vicar of Halifax

(Picture, Canon Hilary preaching at Kowak Cathedral, Diocese of Rorya, 16 February 2020).

The team from Leeds heard first-hand about some of the challenges in education in Tanzania. Government schools typically feature pupil to staff ratios of 120:1. Free education has just been extended from primary only to primary and secondary, but entry to secondary school remains conditional on passing the Standard 7 exam (aged about 13). Fewer than 50% of children currently achieve this standard. Part of the church’s response is the provision of fee-paying church schools where staff: pupil ratios are more favourable, and exam results excellent. Links with Leeds schools are highly valued.

The trip also included visits to a Bible College, girls secondary school and vocational training centre, all in the town of Bunda.



“I think one thing that has struck me is how important the link with Leeds Diocese obviously is to the church/schools/projects we saw. The people were so welcoming and excited to show us, proudly, all they were trying to achieve.”

Ruth Dent, St James’ Woodside



(Picture – assembly at Issenye Secondary School, Diocese of Mara)

“30 years ago, I heard about the Issenye school project and now I have witnessed first-hand the work of the school. I have to pinch myself that I have been where Bill and Maureen Jones worked to create the school and clinic.”

Richard Bland, Christ the King, Battyeford

The team also heard about the efforts of the church to challenge tribal practices, including FGM and marriage for young teenage girls. During a visit to the Safe House for girls in Mugumu in the Serengeti District, we met Wanda, a social worker who is currently volunteering for the Diocese and heard about many successes in reconciling girls with their families. A number of people in Leeds support the work of the Safe House with regular giving. This money is still desperately needed and being spent on the important work of education and cultural change.

One of the ways in which the link supports development work and evangelism is in the promotion and funding of water projects. The team visited a number of new installations, including those at Buhemba Community Development Training Institute and Nyabitocho Parish. One highlight of the visit was the civic opening of a water harvesting project on a school at Kemakorere in the Diocese of Tarime. Canon Maggie McLean, the Tanzania Link Officer, was invited to make a speech at the event, which she partly delivered in Swahili.



(Pictures – Canon Maggie McLean at the opening of the water harvesting project, Kemakorere, Diocese of Tarime. Also pictured Rt Revd Dr Mwita Akiri, Bishop of Tarime and the District Commissioner)

“Tanzania you’ve made my heart and soul sing as well as break a little too. Memories which will last a lifetime. Asante Sana. Bwana Asifiwe!”

Claire Berry, Headteacher St Michael and All Angels CE Primary and Pre-School