



cmsireland
equipping the church in mission

summer snippets 2023



leading lights

This edition of Summer Snippets draws upon blog posts that have featured on our website over the course of the past year.

We believe that our partnership model is something that sets CMS Ireland apart developing deep, transformative friendships across the global church. CMSI's chair of the Board of Trustees, David Reynolds, puts it like this:

"The partnership between a parish and a global partner is at heart a long-term relationship. Like all enduring relationships, it begins tentatively. Over time, often considerable time, the partners allow themselves to show vulnerability, and mutual trust and respect is built".

To enter into the story of people's lives is a privilege and a responsibility. It can be immensely rewarding but brings with it challenges as well. For parishes that embrace this kind of long-term, honest, reciprocal engagement, CMSI walks alongside helping navigate the swaths of bureaucracy that accompany international relations. We also ensure that stories are shared well between places; something which is essential when communication is difficult. This helps the partnering community pray together for one another – prayer is foundational. For those who have the opportunity to visit our global partners in person, their perspectives are broadened and their lives enriched for years to come. Olwen Laird, a previous CMSI board member, reflected on her experience of visiting her church's link parish in Ibba, South Sudan. She writes:



"Since having the privilege of going to Ibba, I now have a much greater understanding of the value of relationships and the power of those relationship between linked parishes. Meeting with people in Ibba and understanding their stories directly found a place in my heart. But I was also impacted in more subtle ways – the inequalities of this world in the distribution of resources was something that I'd not thought much about but had passively accepted as normal. I think I've become less selfish and more charitable in my general outlook and in charities that I support since my visit seven years ago."

Loving others and caring for people underpins everything we do in CMSI. It is the very heartbeat of the Christian gospel. Last summer while on a six-week placement in the city of Alexandria, Rev Timothy Eldon witnessed the warm and loving hospitality of Christians in Egypt first hand. He writes:

"...the hospitality of the churches here has been one of the things I've found very striking. In the gospels we never have to read very far to find Jesus and the disciples sitting down to eat something, and it is the same with the churches in Alexandria, they never miss an opportunity to share food together. Whether it is the midweek Bible study, service of Evening Prayer or the main Communion service, there is always an extended social time over some sandwiches and coffee afterwards... There is a real vision here of what it is to be the family of God, gathering around the spiritual food of God's word, and sharing fellowship over physical food afterwards."

"...We're well known for our hospitality in Ireland too...but the Alexandrian example gives me cause to wonder..."

Timothy continues:

"We're well known for our hospitality in Ireland too... but the Alexandrian example gives me cause to wonder whether we shouldn't be aiming for more than a polite cup of tea and a slice of tart on a special occasion. What would it look like if we took every church meeting as an opportunity for fellowship over food? Perhaps we might start to get a little more of a glimpse of what it will be like at the wedding feast of the Lamb when we share in the Father's glory."



CMSI Trustee, Archdeacon Patrick Bamber, was able to take part of his planned sabbatical in the Province of Alexandria, Cairo, last August. The staff team works hard in preparation for sending and receiving people, striving to help all parties to be effective listeners and learners so that relationships are honoured, and cultural differences navigated with sensitivity. It was refreshing to read Rev Patrick's comments that reflect that sentiment:

"A big factor in mission is to communicate and act in a culturally appropriate way. It takes time to begin to understand a different way of doing things. But it can make such a difference if we don't simply raise our voice to 'get the message across' but rather try our best to genuinely understand".

May each of us enact the words of the apostle James (1:19) which encourage us to be "quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger..." as we walk alongside our partners in ways that promote understanding.

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The experience of being with God's people in other places fostered deeper understanding and insight for Dean Geoff Wilson during his visit to Maridi, South Sudan. Dean Geoff shared with us about a conversation he had with one of his translators whilst in country. Dean Geoff wrote:

"[My translator] had been reflecting on our conversation from the previous day and he asked if I was not concerned for the future of the church. I answered immediately that I was not. If the church were simply the people in Western Europe, then I would probably have said yes, I was. But the church is more than the Church of Ireland or Lutherans in Germany. The church is more than Roman Catholics in Spain or Pentecostals in England."

"The church is global, and the global church is growing."

"On my first Sunday in Maridi, I attended a service of confirmation for thirty-three candidates in the parish of St Peter; twenty-one senior leaders in MU and two lay readers were also commissioned. 2886 people attended the service, which included post-service celebrations lasting five and a half hours in total. The atmosphere was electric and the worship was dynamic; there was a real sense of the Lord's presence in our midst. Both young and old sang, danced and worshipped the most extraordinary God in the most ordinary of contexts. And this attendance was considered to be very low in the Diocese of Maridi!"

"So I say no, the church is not dying, for the global church is very much alive".

This affirmation that the global church is vibrant and dynamic was loudly lauded by CMSI's director Jenny Smyth on a visit to Maridi's Centenary Celebrations. Writing home to us during her time away, Jenny shared these observations:

"The children have swept the compound. I can hear the women chatter as they stoke the fire, wash up from last night and get ready for the day. The bishop's chaplain has finished ironing a surplus – a tricky job with a charcoal iron. The archdeacons, all in their black cassocks, are outside gently preparing for the special communion service today. Their coffee is ready, brewing over charcoal, and someone fetched mandazi snacks. The steam rises in the early morning sun, and around the circle of chairs plans are being finalised for the procession."

"There is such beauty here."

"Last night, Bishop Moses told me that a disabled child was bought to him, the mother asking for prayer. The evangelists are going to pray for the child today. I asked if I could visit with the mother to see if there was any encouragement I could bring her."

"Bishop Moses also explained that there will be a burning of idols. The evangelists have been visiting around the communities and amongst the crowds gathered for these four days of celebrations, and many people have decided to give up their charms as they have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour."

"One hundred years ago, after two years of work here in Maridi, William Haddow died of black water fever after contracting malaria. Eight people had become Christians. A hundred years is not a long time. The Church here is well established and is still growing fast, a Church that has not lost its first love."



This past year we have had a significant number of partners visiting us here, in Ireland. At the Kingdom Voice's conference members of the Mothers' Union from around the world had the opportunity to meet and support one another. After the gender-based violence seminar, Jacqueline Armstrong reflected on this experience of togetherness:

"In Ireland, we speak of #no more 1 in 3, referring to the fact that 1 in 3 women worldwide will experience some form of gender based violence in their lifetime. Yet harrowingly the ladies of DR Congo and South Sudan spoke of it being 2 in 3, often 3 in 3 as a group of three women meet together. A common theme that emerged was that external factors such as climate change, war, disease and political corruption further exacerbate the deep-set cultural and social norms that oppress women..."

"However, there are rumours of light in these forgotten places. Trauma healing initiatives are widespread, generating hope and understanding in family and community situations. This experience can empower women to denounce violence. Lack of external support services for victims has led Mothers' Union to counsel women to stay in the home and offer advice on right relationships. They also commit to support the woman through prayer and hope filled positive action."

Of course, prayer is the bedrock in our relationship with God. It is also the foundation of all our partnership interactions. We care for and pray with each other. After CMSI's day of prayer for DR Congo, Partnership Coordinator Linda Abwa shared with us some responses to this coming together before God.

"Here is just One of many responses to our special call to prayer for DRC on its 62nd Independence Day: 'I saw the call for prayer for DRC today, and like you I pray and have prayed many times. It is such a sad and almost globally forgotten situation.'"

"Bishop Isesomo thanked us for choosing this day as all the denominations in Butembo were also joining together to pray. And so many CMSI members, supporters and link parishes have valued the solidarity of praying together for our church family in Eastern Congo when it seems like a forgotten conflict. Thank you for praying!"

Praying for People

At CMSI, it's been our privilege over many years to have worked in partnership with **Luweero Diocese** in Uganda. **Bishop Eridard Nsubuga** and his wife **Jane** are retiring this summer and we want to pay tribute to their faithful years of service and ministry within the diocese. Both have worked tirelessly to build up God's people in Luweero as they have ministered to the most vulnerable and marginalised, demonstrating the love of God in both word and deed. Pray with us for Bishop Eridard and Jane as God leads them into a new phase of ministry. Bishop Eridard will be succeeded by the **Ven. Canon Godfrey Kasana** the Archdeacon of Ndejje who was elected by the House of Uganda Bishops meeting to be 4th bishop of Luweero when Bishop Eridard retires. His service of consecration will take place in July. Pray for a smooth transition of leadership.



During **Archbishop and Madame Mbanda's** visit we enjoyed fellowship over coffee and then had the privilege of listening to the Archbishop speak about the wonderful things God is doing in Rwanda. The church has been at the forefront of this progress - facilitating reconciliation, unity and hope through the transforming love of Jesus. Madame Chantal spoke warmly about the strategic impact of the Mothers' Union in Rwanda asking us to pray for a major conference they are planning this summer.

Calum, a fourth-year medical student at Queen's University Belfast from Agherton Parish in Portstewart, will be undertaking a medical elective at **Kiwoko hospital** in Uganda from late June for four weeks. It's wonderful to see God stirring the hearts of individuals in response to his call. Pray that Calum's time at Kiwoko will be useful for his future medical career and that it will be a time when God rekindles his faith. May God use him to be a blessing to those he meets.



We were deeply saddened to hear about the death of a number of CMSI stalwarts this year: **Dr Margaret Knox** in February and **Felix Blennerhassett** in March. One year on, **Cecil Wilson's** passing was marked by a memorial service in February. We thank God for the lives of these individuals and ask you to remember their families as they grieve.

News Items

Zimmerman family moving on from Nepal:

After 36 and 26 years respectively (and the whole of their boys' lives) in Nepal, Deirdre and Mark are moving to the US in July this year. Deirdre writes, "We very much appreciate all the support we receive as part of CMSI and we ask for your prayers for this move over the coming months as we figure out the details of where God is leading."

SDSS Conference: BA and the team from SDSS collaborated with the Nepal Christian Disability Network to host the first National Christian Disability Conference Nepal from 1-3 March 2023 in Lalitpur, Kathmandu. They reflected on the theme "Building God's Church: Engage, Include and Be inspired". 350 delegates attended to hear from one another about living with disability and how we can minister together and serve our communities.

Burundi and Rwanda visit: Partnership Coordinator, Roger Thompson, accompanied Rev Johnny and Mrs Emily Lowden from Glendermott Parish on a visit to Matana Diocese, Burundi. Bishop Seth and Rev Yvette welcomed them. They were delighted to meet with pastors and church members, engage with clergy training and Emily helped with some teacher training. At the Bujumbura Christian University they caught up with Keith Scott who is supporting clergy training. Roger also visited Gitega Diocese, and then travelled to Rwanda visiting partners in Shyogwe and Kibungo.

Gitega Church Roofs:

Funds raised by St Mark's, Ballymacash have provided iron sheets for the roofing of two newly constructed churches in Gikwiye and Muhwazi. Please pray for pastors Rev Jeremie, Rev Gaspard, and Archdeacon Faïda, and for the building work going on now. Bishop Aimé Joseph sent his sincere thanks: "roofing with iron sheets will not only improve the places of worship but also will ensure the safety of the worshippers during both rainy and dry seasons. Improved church construction is a sign of church development and affords dignity to the worshippers."



A big thank you to the Church of Ireland Press Office for awarding **inMission** first prize in their Communications Competition, "Organisations affiliated with the Church of Ireland" category.

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