

Friday 28 July 2023

To all licensed clergy and head teachers

*"For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." 2 Corinthians 8 v9*

Dear Friends,

### **Bishop's Harvest Appeal 2023: A Nation Rebuilt with Christ at its Heart**

Last summer, during the Lambeth conference, I met one of the most inspirational Christian leaders I have ever come across. Bishop Joseph Aba is the Bishop of Liwolo, which is in the southern part of South Sudan. Just two days after he was elected Bishop, that whole part of South Sudan was plunged into the most terrible and destructive Civil War. Bishop Joseph had to lead his people into exile.

The people from Liwolo have been living in refugee camps in the northern part of Uganda and are now starting to return to their country. As they leave those refugee camps behind and go back to South Sudan, Bishop Joseph has the most wonderful vision of a nation transformed under Christ.

He shared something of that vision with us here in Lancashire when he visited us earlier this year for a week. You can read about his visit [as a reminder here](#). That page also includes the full video recording of the 'World Mission Evening' we held at St Cuthbert's in Preston.

Bishop Joseph's work is not just evangelism, discipleship and church planting. His vision is so much wider than that; he is also involved in education and healthcare, particularly wanting the best possible education for the young of South Sudan. He is involved in the work of reconciliation, bringing together warring tribes; he wants to see agricultural security for all his people and to address issues around gender violence.

Bishop Joseph is serving some of the poorest people in the world; but, despite all the suffering and pain, what amazed me was the vibrancy of Bishop Joseph's faith and his real ambition for the Kingdom. His vision is for a nation rebuilt with Christ at its heart. The more I spoke to Bishop Joseph, the more I began to see the possibility of a friendship link between our Diocese and the Diocese of Liwolo.



These friendship links are quite difficult to arrange, so I was delighted to hear about a charity called [CRESS UK](#). They are a small English charity, but one that is present on the ground in the refugee camps in Uganda and offering real practical support as people try to

rebuild their shattered lives and access proper healthcare and education. So, this year, my Bishop's Harvest Appeal we will be supporting the work of CRESS UK.

The people of the Diocese of Blackburn are always monumentally generous when it comes to the harvest appeal, but I hope that, this year, we will be particularly generous. Generous with our money, knowing that every penny given to the harvest appeal will go to a really strong cause. But I hope, above all, we are generous with our prayer and we keep the people of Liwolo Diocese and Bishop Joseph, very much in our prayers as they seek to rebuild their nation.

It is not often we find really inspirational Christian leaders. Bishop Joseph is one, and so I pray we can support him, his priests and his people with our generosity and our prayer and we can make a difference.

Providing Bishop Joseph with a vehicle dedicated solely to his Diocesan ministry would enable growth, discipleship teaching, pastoral work, peace reconciliation and major events such as youth and pastor conferences and confirmations to happen. Bishop Joseph currently oversees 117,000 refugees with half of those attending his 100+ refugee settlement churches. This ministerial work means he regularly travels over 100km each way on very rough roads and transport is almost the biggest challenge to his ministry.

Members of CRESS's 42 agriculture groups have already started planting trees as part of their organic food production. The trees offer multiple benefits of nutritious fruit for improving diets, income generation from the sale of fruit after only a couple of years, and also protection from severe sun and rainfall. With your support, new this year will be the addition of locally sourced fast-growing fuelwood trees which are in huge need due to deforestation as wood is the main source of energy for cooking in the refugee settlements.

More information about CRESS, the appeal, including information which you can use for publicity, can be found on our website page which you can [access here](#). My video message about this year's harvest appeal is also available for viewing and sharing [here](#). Information about Bishop Joseph and his diocese can be found [here](#).

There are different ways to donate:

- You can donate **online** using a credit card [by clicking here](#).
- You can donate through the **Parish Giving Scheme** by [clicking here](#).
- You can donate by **cheque**, payable to 'Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance Limited (Diocese Harvest Appeal)' and send to  
Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance, Diocesan Office, Clayton House,  
Walker Office Park, Blackburn, BB1 2QE
- You can **scan** the QR code on the right with your smartphone which will take you to the donation page where you can also Gift Aid your payment.



Yours

+ Philip Blackburn