

April 2nd 2024

Dear friends,

A very happy Easter to you all.

It was a great pleasure for us to be able to share the Triduum and Easter Day with the Herbert family from one of our supporting churches in Herefordshire. They joined us (and about ten thousand others) for the extraordinary ecumenical 'Way of the Cross' on Good Friday which follows actors remembering the road to Calvary on an eight kilometre walk around Gulu finishing this year at the Roman Catholic Cathedral. They joined with us for worship at Christ Church Gulu on Easter morning. They also assisted us (enthusiastically) mucking out (Stephen) and feeding the pigs in college (Alex, Daniel and Jonathan) and were able to see the diocesan lands and the areas presently being prepared for planting coffee, cocoa and soya before they left for further adventures in the south west of the country.

The above paragraph is a good snapshot of what is happening at present. About fifteen acres of diocesan land has now been ploughed and is awaiting secondary tillage before planting. For the soya this involves broadcast and covering as it might have been done for thousands of years. A good tractor, harrow and seed drill would be a wonderful improvement and make a lot of difference, but the capital costs of such things are way out of reach, along with the absence of the infrastructure needed to maintain them. Likewise the holes for the coffee, cocoa and bananas we intend to plant are needing to be hand dug, and at five hundred holes per acre that's a lot of labour. We are praying to the Lord will be kind to us concerning the weather. Farming anywhere in the world is a precarious business, as we are hearing from our friends in Shropshire.

In the College the exam season is upon us, and at this point in time we are praying the students will be able to sit their exams locally, rather than have to travel to take them in Arua which is four hours drive away. The process of registering the College with the National Council is moving forwards, if slowly. Following an unfortunate incident with a ceiling collapse in one of the men's dormitories due to poor construction mercifully it appears the remedy to make the other rooms safe is to put in partitions, which we were going to have to do anyway to receive our certificate of occupancy, which has now been granted, so the loss has been very modest compared to what it might have been. God is gracious! The library cataloguing is almost complete (the work extended by some generous donations from Herefordshire – thank you Alex and carrying of books from Mansfield by other visitors!) and the new chapel is enjoyed twice a day with morning and night prayers. It is the first building that visitors see as they enter college, and a great asset to the campus. We are also very grateful for the provision of twenty new laptops of which five have now arrived in college with the rest following as visitors come. Thank you to those of you who took part in that fund raising nine months ago.

The follow up for Rooted in Jesus is continuing and next month we expect to be touring the diocese to meet with parish group leaders and see how their experience of the groups is going on and the joys and challenges they are facing. We are hearing a good amount of anecdotal evidence of groups being set up and going well, but it will be good to engage with the conference graduates in a more systematic way.

Please pray for us:

For the Diocese of Northern Uganda as they continue to invest in long term capital projects with a view to becoming financially viable.

for Simon as he works with the community and colleagues in planting the land which has been ploughed.

For the college, that the students remain in good heart, and that we are wise in taking in new students in May

For Sarah to have patience and love as she works towards registration of the college.

Let us know how to best pray for you.

With prayers for a joyful Eastertide and revival at Pentecost!

Simon and Sarah