

# South Sudan – Making bricks without straw

Moses is a good name for a Bishop. Leading a church in the dusty, dry heat of Southern Sudan where daytime temperatures at this time of year reach 45 degrees centigrade he tells us of his plans for the new school that will open in April and the new clinic nearing completion. We can see the skeleton of the new cathedral church; it has no walls, just steel girders holding up the vast roof but it tells the story of a church that has emerged from the chaos of war as a place of hope and new life. The cathedral compound is slowly being cleared of the debris of thousands of IDP's (Internally displaced people), refugees who fled from the fighting during the civil war. The diocesan office is getting a new lick of paint but ceiling sags where the bullet holes in the roof still let in the rain. During the war, he tells us, the Church grew so fast that the bishops decided that they must ordain clergy as quickly as possible. Thousands of young men and women were ordained without training, but now that there was peace he could begin. A new theological college has opened, but it has no books and only one teacher.

'Making bricks without straw' seemed like an easy job compared to this challenge. Bishop Moses had invited us, as part of the Salisbury diocesan Sudan link, to train 60 of his young clergy and equip them to teach their own congregations – without books! This is not an unfamiliar challenge in the African churches where books are a luxury. The 'Rooted in Jesus' course was first developed in Tanzania and has now been successfully used in churches across Africa. It is built around 'small groups' of 10 to 12 people using much the same method as Jesus must have used with his first disciples. These disciples became the leaders of the early church, taking the teaching of Jesus to thousands of small groups, where gifts of leadership were nurtured and developed not in a theological college but in House churches. It was all done without books, but in an oral culture where stories are told and passages of scripture are memorised this comes naturally.

As we were driven back to our accommodation each day we saw the wreckage of war. A burnt out plane lay alongside the road, we passed ruined buildings where battles had been fought, but there were also piles of clay bricks stacked neatly for baking. They had been dug out of the dry desert and were ready for baking; bricks without straw. A new start for Southern Sudan.

Revd Simon Brignall, Rooted in Jesus  
team leader, March 2013

