

NEW CHURCH OPENED DURING DARFUR PASTORAL VIST

REPORT OF THE BISHOP OF EL OBEID'S VISIT TO EL GENEINA AND NYALA IN NOVEMBER 2008

Celebrations have been held in El Jeniena, Western Darfur, for the construction of the first church built there with permanent materials. El Jeneina is situated in the Westernmost part of the ECS Diocese of El Obeid, close to the border with Chad, and hosts a West African contingent of the joint United Nations / African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). The 1000-seater brick church under construction makes a reality of the vision long-held by the Diocese of El Obeid. It has become possible due to the efforts of the UNAMID soldiers led by their Nigerian military chaplain, the Revd Lt J.O. Jolayemi. The foundation was laid on 14th September and the building has now reached to lintel level and was the site for a special service of celebration on 19th November.



El Jeneina church under construction



Bishop Ismail with UNAMID Christians

Making his first pastoral visit to El Jeneina, the Bishop of El Obeid, Rt Revd Ismail Gibreil Abudigin, arrived on 18th November to be welcomed by representatives of the UNAMID force. They proceeded together to the church tent used daily by the soldiers for Evening Prayer. The following day, during the special service of celebration in the new church, two Nigerian soldiers were confirmed by Bishop Ismail and Revd Lt Jolayemi made a Canon in recognition of his hard work in service to the church. Local Christians attended the service, including those working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in West Darfur. The Bishop preached a strong message of encouragement, urging the faithful to rely on God in all things. Special prayers were said for the safety and protection of the peace-keeping soldiers and for healing for the sick. The Bishop also held good discussions with the Muslim army chaplain and witnessed the good pastoral co-operation between the Christian chaplain and Imam.

The Diocese of El Obeid plans to send a Sudanese pastor to El Jeneina to work alongside the new military chaplain after the Nigerian unit is replaced in December at the end of its 6-month tour. Continued efforts and co-operation will be needed in future to ensure the successful completion of the new church.



Bishop Ismail visits UNAMID compound

Bishop blesses during Morning Devotion

After visiting El Jeneina, Bishop Ismail proceeded to Nyala in South Darfur to visit the Christians there and licence two new Lay Readers. At the same time, he confirmed four young people in a big celebration in the ECS church compound. The service was attended by the Political Advisor to the State Governor, the Prison Officer-in-charge and representatives of NGOs working in the area. A new church has been constructed which also serves as a multi-purpose centre and evening school offering adult education to the local community.



Nyala Licensing Service with new church on left

Bishop Ismail confirms in Nyala

The Diocese of El Obeid is now active in all three States of Western Sudan. In South Darfur, the Diocese is now seeking additional land for a larger church and school in the future. In El Fasher, North Darfur, there has already been built a church and 6-class primary school and new land is sought for a secondary school in the future.

Contributions from friends of the Diocese towards completion of the church in El Jeneina and towards support for the on-going mission of the Diocese will be gratefully received and may be sent through the Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan or through the Sudan Church Association. Please also notify the Bishop of El Obeid at ismailabudigin_2007@yahoo.com.