

Issue 17

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We are one body in Christ Re-mele o le mong ho Kreste

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Drive north from Mofale Hoek and on the left you will see a sign to Qhalasi High School, bump down a heavily rutted track for about 15 minutes and you will arrive at the school, what I noticed was the motto - Qhalasi High School THE FUTURE.

This was my second visit to Lesotho and I was lucky enough to be able to spend a month there in February, two weeks visiting Anglican schools on my own and with Motlalepula Mokoqo the Education Secretary, and then 2 weeks with students from The Venerable Bede Church of England Academy in Sunderland. I was wearing my hats as Chair of the Durham Diocesan Board of

Education and as Chair of the Dayspring Trust which includes Venerable Bede and Ian Ramsey two church schools with links to Lesotho. All in all I spent time in 12 schools, primary, secondary and high schools. The purpose of my visit was to gain a greater insight into Anglican schools in Lesotho and also to reflect on our educational links here in Durham Diocese.

On my second visit to Lesotho I was once again struck by the thirst and passion for education from pupils that I spoke to. I have certainly said more than once to our students from Sunderland, 'I wish I could bottle some of that and bring it to England!' There is massive pride in school uniform. Education truly as THE FUTURE. It is clear that this is how many young people view their chance in school, even though future options for some may be very limited indeed and that if they can move from primary school at 13 and pay fees for education at secondary or high school.



Historically the primary provider of education in Lesotho has been the churches - the three biggest today are the Roman Catholic Church, the Lesotho Evangelical Church and the Anglican Church. The number of government schools is significantly less, but the largest pot of resource sits with the government, as they employ and pay teachers and in the future if new laws are passed will have the major say in appointments to all schools which is causing concern among principals, about quality and also the ability to support and develop the christian ethos.

It feels to me that church schools are not getting a fair share of national resources available. A recent decision to cap fees for secondary education is causing real pressure on school budgets and leaves very little for resources, feeding programmes, capital works and repairs. New government schools are being built but I fear there is the danger of this happening without real strategic planning in relation to need and pupil numbers and this could have an adverse affect on Anglican schools in the future, putting schools in competition with each other. A cry of course we hear in this country about the rise of 'Free Schools'! It was also interesting to hear concerns about the new primary curriculum - not enough consultation, a rushed implementation and not enough training - I wonder where I have heard those things before!! *continued over page*

CENTENARY CELEBRATION

Congratulations to Mrs Edith Pierce who reached her first century on Easter Monday. Edith, who lives in Lanchester, has been a long term, keen supporter of the LINK, visiting Lesotho when she was 80, attending prayer meetings and LINK events. Edith was also our oldest participant in the Great North Bus Challenge, taking part in that sponsored event during her nineties!

THE KING IS COMING!

We are very excited to be able to break the news that, to mark the 30th anniversary of the Durham Lesotho LINK, their Majesties King Letsie III and Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso have accepted an invitation to make their first ever visit to the Durham diocese. They will be in Durham from June 23rd to 27th and will have a fairly packed programme. They will be visiting a school, factories, farms, worshipping at Escomb, attending a cricket match, dining with members of the business community and meeting LINK supporters at Chester-le-Street. The King had expressed a wish to visit Durham and to promote the work of the LINK and we are delighted that this is about to happen. We will cover the visit in the next edition of e-MOHO.

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My time in Lesotho has impressed upon me the need to try and not look at everything through western eyes. In England we do it like this. It is obvious to say that we are not comparing like with like - the £10 million budget of the Dayspring Trust for two secondary schools is simply on another planet. I met principals who are doing amazing things with very little, in buildings that aren't great, some in schools without electricity in remote locations, caring for young people in remarkable ways. They have to deal with the ongoing impact of poverty, HIV/Aids, geography, transport problems and pressure on school finances. I met some entrepreneurs who are finding ways to feed their children by running school farms and small holdings and what is clear is that the children are at the heart of it and in the Anglican way making this available for all.



I could write about, teaching, examination data, school management, church engagement, diocesan vision and strategy but that's for another day and for more reflection on education in the Kingdom in the Sky.

Stuart Bain Archdeacon of Sunderland

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

Please pray for the country of Lesotho as the effects of a severe drought bites ever deeper and the government declares a state of emergency.

Give thanks for the forthcoming visit by the King and Queen of Lesotho and pray that it will be an enjoyable occasion for them and will raise awareness of the LINK in the Durham diocese.

Give thanks for the recent grant from the American embassy in Lesotho which will facilitate the training of village support team members to offer appropriate care for Child Headed Households.

Please pray that the new accommodation unit being built at the LINK site will prove to be as big a financial asset as the other accommodation facilities.