

Issue 24

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

emoHO

## HIS EXCELLENCY MEETS HIS LORDSHIP

In the week running up to Christmas the new Lesotho High Commissioner, Dr John Oliphant, made his first visit to Durham. It was an opportunity for him to meet with some of the LINK trustees to learn a little bit about the LINK and to share in a frank and open fashion his reflections on the current and future state of Lesotho. This was also a chance to explore possible



fresh ways in which the LINK might be able to serve the people of Lesotho, and discussions are ongoing. However, the central purpose of the visit was to make a courtesy call on Bishop Paul, acknowledging the considerable time and energy which Bishop Paul put into the recent visit to Durham by the King and Queen of Lesotho. It was a very cordial meeting which we trust will enhance the relationship between the two dioceses of Lesotho and Durham. His Excellency accompanied by the First Secretary, Mr Peter Potjo, was given a tour of the new Miners Art Gallery in Bishop Auckland, which had added resonance as he had worked in his youth as a miner in South Africa.

Durham-based colleagues of Dr Oliphant from his time as director of the National Teacher Training College and latterly as Rector of the Lesotho College of Education were also able to catch up with him, sharing memories stretching back several years.

It is hoped that there will be more occasions during Dr Oliphant's tenure when he will be able to visit Durham Diocese again and get to meet more people from this end of the LINK.

## THE START OF A NEW PARTNERSHIP?

Even as this e-MOHO is being written, a party from Rock UK (a Christian outdoor organisation) are in Lesotho. This is a group of third year trainee instructors who, with their leaders, will be spending two weeks working alongside staff at the LINK. They will be helping them to expand further the courses they run, equipping them with the latest ideas and helping to develop additional onsite activities (such as a low ropes course). LINK staff are always eager for fresh ways of working with the youngsters in their care, and this provides a wonderful training opportunity for Rock UK for people on the final year of their course. This is a pilot programme and if all goes well it is hoped it might become an annual event which will be mutually beneficial for two organisations which have the same ultimate goal in mind, that of reaching young people for God through outdoor activities.

## ACCEPTING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG OFFENDERS

Making a significant impact in the lives of young people who have fallen foul of the law is one way which the Lesotho Durham LINK is serving the country. The Juvenile Training Centre (JTC) is Lesotho's only detention centre for children in conflict with the law aged between 13 to 17. They are brought to the Centre in Maseru from all ten districts of Lesotho. The main purpose is rehabilitation so that they will return to their communities as productive and law-abiding citizens.

Realising the limits of government resources, the management at JTC works with other partners in its rehabilitation programmes. The Durham LINK is one of those whom the head of JTC, Mr Manaka, identifies as providing "a helping hand...adding value to our programmes". JTC is one of the partner organisations of the LINK Coalition project, which provides courses and activities for a range of organisations, who work with the deaf, those who are mentally impaired, people living with disabilities and abused children.

Because their day to day living is in confined quarters, attending courses at the LINK provides them with the opportunity to enjoy activities, ranging from swimming, canoeing and climbing to computer games and team building. Mr Manaka believes these experiences help to "enhance their talents and help them to become innovative and creative as a result". He added, "boys and girls who participate... have shown a notable difference in behavioural change"

For the LINK staff, however, perhaps the most significant and heart-warming comment he made was this, "Despite their situation at the centre (JTC), Durham LINK has shown them acceptance unlike other people who stigmatise and neglect them due to what they have done".

## POINTS FOR PRAYER

Please pray for the forthcoming visit to Lesotho by Rock UK, Bishop Paul and staff and students from Ven. Bede Academy.

Remember in prayer the ongoing tense political situation in Lesotho and pray that the presence of SADC troops will be a positive influence.

Give thanks for the Discipleship Trainees and their mentors who are growing in their commitment to share their faith and to serve God in their communities in Lesotho.

Please pray for the Durham LINK trustees as they seek to support and further the mission of the LINK in Lesotho, and especially for Rick Simpson who will join them as Archdeacon of Auckland and as the senior staff representative.

## SAVE THE DATE

We don't know where, but we do know when!! The Durham Lesotho LINK will hold its annual gathering on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The venue is still to be finalised. This is our chance to share updates with all that is happening in Lesotho and the LINK, see photos of recent developments, hear stories from recent visitors, to ask questions and to hear plans. It is also an opportunity to pray for the LINK in the work it does. The evening will start at 7pm. Check the next edition of e-MOHO to find out the venue but meanwhile why not put the date in your new 2018 diary?!

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