



Martin Gordon

Link Letter no. 1 | December 2024



Location: DR Congo



What I do: Peacemaking, church planting and building up the body of Christ as part of my role as Bishop of Goma



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

I hope you are enjoying this Advent season. I'd like to use my first link letter to share a bit more about what we are doing in Goma.

Church planting

Our vision for the Diocese of Goma is to plant 50 new churches in five years, and we thank God that this is well underway. To do this we train local evangelists, often for two months at a time in portable Bible schools, before organising local open-air evangelism campaigns with choirs and very loud sound systems. This method is very effective, especially in more rural areas. And on a recent trip to Walikale, our archdeaconry in the forest, we saw over 500 people proclaim faith in Jesus over a three-day open-air campaign in the central market.

We are working towards every church, whether well-established and newly planted, having its own land and set of ownership documents, church building and pastor's house. To build churches, we encourage the local believers to build the foundations and the walls, and the diocese then provides the metal sheeting and nails for the roof.

Traditionally, in much of DRC, land was given to the church by local chiefs as a way of bringing development to their area, but increasingly we have to buy it, with prices ranging from two goats to several thousand USD. Once we have acquired land one of the trickiest parts of church-planting, especially in urban areas, is protecting the land from the encroachments of neighbours and locals, even with the correct documents.

Wall building

Several decades ago a local chief gave the diocese over five hectares of land in Ngangi, an area north of the city. Unfortunately, we had insufficient resources to build on it at the time and so over the years locals built houses and claimed some of the land for themselves. Much of the land has been lost but recently, through a generous partner, we were able to build a 730-metre wall around the remaining three hectares to secure it for church development.

This September, believers from across the diocese gathered to give thanks for the provision of the wall. We read from Nehemiah 6:16, recalling the significance of rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem in biblical times: "When



Blessing the newly built 730m wall around the plot of land chosen for building the new theological college in Ngangi, in the north of Goma

Support Martin Gordon:
churchmissionsociety.org/gordon

**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**

all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realised that this work had been done with the help of our God.” Ngangi is the chosen site for the new theological college for the diocese, with building work due to start in July 2025.

A new catechism

On the national level I lead the Theology Commission for the Anglican Church of Congo. After tackling the philosophy and methodology for theological training in our 13 diocesan Bible schools, about a year ago the commission started to rewrite the catechism of the Anglican Church. For those unfamiliar with catechisms, this is a traditional question-and-answer approach to teaching the basics of the Christian faith, which was very popular at the time of the Reformation in 16th-century Europe and is enjoying something of a comeback!

The new catechism has 10 chapters covering believing in Christ, the Trinity, the Bible, prayer, the Church, Christian living and Christian hope. As well as rewriting it, we've increased the number of questions from around 60 to 250. In our approach we have tried to move away from a traditional rote-learning model to a more reflective, discussion-based approach that focuses on practical application.

The almost-final draft was adopted at our recent House of Bishops meeting in September and the finalised French version will be ready in the New Year. This plan is then to translate it into Swahili and Lingala before rolling it out across the whole church from summer 2025. The hope is that this will be a significant discipleship tool for baptism and confirmation candidates as well as for the Anglican Church of Congo as a whole.

50 years of faithfulness

Marriage in DRC is a three-ceremony affair. First comes the traditional marriage, with the giving and receiving of the dowry – ranging from a few goats to up to 10 cows. When the presents have been given, then the civil and religious ceremonies are planned. The time between the traditional and the church wedding can in some cases be years as the families save up for the big day.

We have recently been encouraging the Anglican believers to do what they can to reduce the amount of dowry paid as well as reducing the cost of the wedding party. Many have taken the advice to heart and are starting to have simpler church weddings, followed by drinks and cake, while saving up for the big party in a few years' time.

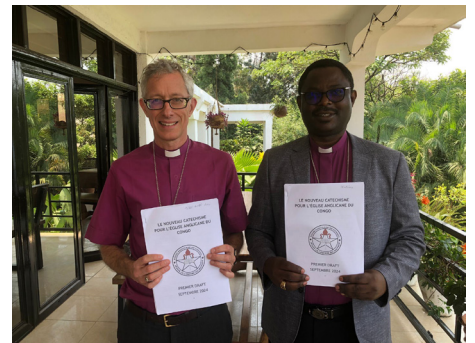
A recent encouragement in the Diocese of Goma is Archdeacon of Goma John Mujuna and his wife, Mama Providence, celebrating 50 years of marriage. In November we held a service at the cathedral as a service of thanksgiving and as a testimony to the faithfulness of God since they first said, “I do” in 1974. Archdeacon John started out as an evangelist a year later in 1975 and when he retires next year, he will have done some 49 years of faithful ministry in the Anglican Church.

Please pray

- ▶ for the opportunity to purchase more land for church planting,
- ▶ for the training of more evangelists,
- ▶ for the final stages of the catechism, its translation into Lingala and Swahili and its impact across the church as a whole.

Wishing you a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Martin



Photos from top to bottom: Bishops Martin and Bertin with the almost-finished new catechism for the Anglican Church of Congo; Canon John and Mama Providence celebrate 50 years of marriage – something rarely witnessed in eastern Congo



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

I've been encouraged to hear recent mission stories from around my wider area of work. In South Sudan, communities have taken steps towards peace as pastors from different tribal groups reconciled, and my colleague Joan has shared a growing vision of a new tribe of peacemakers. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this update on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400. Church Mission Society is a Registered Company No. 6985330 and Registered Charity No. 1131655 (England and Wales) and SC047163 (Scotland).