



Martin Gordon

Update from the Edges no.1 | March 2025



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'm really pleased to be able to share with you how God has been working through CMS partners who, like me, are helping to empower people pushed to the edges of life to reach their God-given potential. Over recent months I've heard how Alison's church in Ukraine is ministering to people facing the pain and trauma of war. And friends in Paraguay have shared how a CMS-facilitated mission project is helping a young man learn academically and spiritually. I hope these stories can encourage you too.

National synod: In January we held national synod of the Anglican Church of Congo. 70 of the 75 delegates passed through Goma on the northern shore of Lake Kivu, on our way to Bukavu on the southern shore. Some had already taken two flights to get to Goma, others came via Uganda and Rwanda due to ongoing fighting in eastern DRC, others spent five days in Goma before the synod due to timings of flights and some travelled more than 3,000 km.



Members of the Anglican Church of Congo College of Bishops on the way to synod.

We then took the six-hour boat journey together and were welcomed at the other end with a fanfare by the Diocese of Bukavu. The national synod happens every three years, with the last one being in July 2021 in Kindu. As we deliberated the next three years of the church's mission and ministry, and heard what was going on diocese by diocese, we were able to thank God for his goodness and pray for his strength for the time ahead. For me some of the encouraging decisions were:

- ▶ To mobilise resources for evangelism to grow the church from 300,000 to 1 million in the next five years.
- ▶ To adopt the new catechism for the Anglican Church of Congo and to teach it to every church member.
- ▶ To create a new Department of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation to pursue the church's prophetic mission.
- ▶ To create a new diocese in Uvira in South Kivu.

The city is in ruins: Goma has been in the news a lot recently and for all the wrong reasons. The Rwandan-backed M23 rebels had been camped 30 kilometres north and west of the city for some months, but in January they began to advance. On Sunday 26 January Rwandan soldiers came across the border and over the next few days helped the M23 take control of the city.

As a family we had left the day before, but for those who stayed it was unspeakably awful. We now know up to 8,000 people died in the street battles that followed the Rwandan incursion (statistics from the Congolese

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To the edges**



government). There was no power, no internet and limited water for days. The hospitals were overwhelmed by the thousands of casualties. Food was scarce and prices rocketed. Widespread looting followed, sexual violence increased, cars were stolen, shops and homes broken into, and fear reigned supreme. I heard from many who were hiding in their homes, behind doors and under beds. They didn't know what the future would hold and asked why the world looked the other way.

A month later a relative calm had returned, but the airport remained closed as did the banks, humanitarian aid was slow in coming, and parents kept their children away from school with stories of forced recruitment of boys as young as 15. Displacement camps were cleared but with fear of where people would return to, and mob justice increased with the justice system not operating.

The international community condemned the action but the M23 continued their march to take control of other cities.

The Goma Call for Peace: Words from Nehemiah rang particularly true for me at this time (Nehemiah 1:3–4, 11):

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire. When I heard these things, I sat down and wept... Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and... give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man.

After leaving Goma, I launched the Goma Call For Peace with other church leaders and youth organisations. I was determined to use my position and voice to amplify the pleas of those living in Goma to call on the international community to act decisively for peace. This took me to Washington DC to take the call to the US government and to New York to take it to the UN. I was well received in both places, was able to give updates from the ground and to advocate on behalf of those I serve. Avaaz, the largest global online campaign, also took up the call and made it global, gathering 300,000 signatures in the first two days alone.

Hope in the darkness: One ray of light in the midst of the darkness was that on the very morning that the Rwandan army entered Goma, I received a message from Rev Innocent about Walikale. Walikale is our missionary archdeaconry in the forest and Rev Innocent our main evangelist and church planter there. Hiding in his house in Goma from the fighting he wrote, "We have planted a new church in Hombo! They met for the first time today. Rev Barnabas has been leading an outreach. He asks for Bibles and prayer books to strengthen the new churches."

Please pray

- ▶ For the implementation of the decisions made at national synod
- ▶ For an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of uninvited troops from eastern DRC
- ▶ For unrestricted humanitarian access and protection of civilians
- ▶ For negotiations to lead to a lasting peace in DRC
- ▶ For wisdom and courage for church leaders as they rebuild schools, churches, lives and communities after the conflict
- ▶ For continued church-planting in Walikale

Every blessing, Martin



Photos from top to bottom: Synod delegates after the closing ceremony; launching the #GomaCallForPeace and handing it to UN Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Martha Pobe; a new church plant in Hombo, Walikale.



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 Ukraine, families are being assured they are not alone amid the hardship of war, and our colleagues in Paraguay have seen a young man overcome challenges to learn academically and spiritually. Read more at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

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

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