



## The Bristol Uganda Link – its past and its future

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### **An Important Year**

We intend to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bristol – Uganda Link in October 2019.

Half a century of partnership means we have plenty to look back on. It also provides us with a strong foundation to evaluate what we are doing together in the present, and to consider what any future partnership might look like.

### **How did all begin?**

The short answer to that is, “With a friendship”.

Bishop of Bristol, Rt Revd Oliver Tomkins, and the Very Revd Erica Sabiti, who was Archbishop of Uganda at the time, developed a friendship out of which hundreds of friendships have sprung.

It is impossible to have a relationship with somebody, unless you share a part of your life with them. That is why we have always viewed exchange visits as the lifeblood of the Link.

A few decades ago, visitors to the UK were predominantly clergy. And male. Today, there is a much greater diversity. Men, women, young people, clergy and lay people, and those for whom church has played little part in their lives, have all made the journey to or from Entebbe airport.

### **What is it all about?**

The focus of the Link is friendship rather than on charity.

Inevitably, those who travel often want to help financially. It is a human response in the face of need.

But our diocesan website makes clear that the link is not a fundraising organisation. It does not attempt to compete with mission agencies. It rejects any idea of fostering a parent-child relationship or encouraging a giver–receiver integrity between our two countries.

The point of going to Uganda is not to ask, “What can we give?”, but “What can we learn?”

Over many years, we have created connections not just with church leaders, but with taxi drivers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, headteachers and local people to allow people to have a memorable and safe visit to Uganda.

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## **Building on 2009**

We want to build on the good experiences of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. At that time a music group called “Uganda fire” performed in a number of different venues across the Diocese of Bristol. They visited schools, colleges and churches. They sang, they spoke of their faith, and they led us in worship.

So as we look forward to 2019, we want “Uganda Fire” to be at the centre of our programme. We want not only to sing and celebrate, but also to do mission together.

## **The Uganda Link Committee**

The Link Committee meets three times a year. Raymond Adams is the current chair. Chris Dobson, who is a frequent visitor to Uganda, has the role of Ecumenical and Global Partnership Adviser, and supports the work of the Link in the diocese.

The Link Committee has representatives from each of the seven deaneries. Because we do not relate diocese to diocese, but rather diocese to nation, there is sometimes an imbalance in terms of size. Some UK dioceses aim to link with a much smaller geographical area.

## **Questions for the future**

What is the best system of organisation to ensure that the link flourishes? Should we necessarily attempt to develop relationships with the entire country as we have in the past?

## **The record of the past**

We have invested hugely in our relationship with Uganda over the years. Chris Dobson regularly prepares groups as they go out, and every year new relationships are formed.

Uganda is Anglophone. That does make it extremely easy for groups to travel and for people from Bristol and Uganda to relate to each other.

Nevertheless, we recognise that many churches have only a tenuous link with Uganda. We do not want to cut across the mission interests of parish churches. But equally we want to make sure that we use the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations to help people with little knowledge of the Link to discover it, and hopefully, become part of it.

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations 2019**

The Diocesan Board of Finance has currently allocated £5,000 for the events of October.

Our aim to make an impact in each deanery. Uganda Fire will play and sing in every deanery. In addition, we would like there to be a special service, probably at the Cathedral.

All events will be branded with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo currently being produced by the diocese.

We plan to ask Ugandan dioceses to mark the occasion there, even if their bishops are in the UK the time.

11 February 2019