

October 2023

# Bamenda News



## Annual Overview:

The resilience of the communities in Bamenda is truly inspiring, doing their best to live life positively and fruitfully, despite the socio-political crisis rumbling on. A recent [Amnesty International report](#) on the situation makes hard reading. They are also dealing with inflation, making everyday life and the completion of projects more difficult as prices escalate.

2022-23 has been a year of transition on both sides of the link: in Bamenda, Fr Bernardine Nsom has formed a new Committee, having been appointed Chair on his return from the UK in October 2022; in Portsmouth, the incorporation of the Diocese in 2023 led to new Terms of Reference for our Committee and a new way of working. Project applications recently received from Bamenda will be considered at the December Board of Trustees.

In 2024, we shall be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the link, with Archbishop Andrew leading a delegation to Portsmouth for a week in July, visas permitting. Please be as generous as you can this Bamenda Sunday to boost our funds for projects in our Golden Jubilee Year! Every contribution, whatever its size, can help to make a big difference in Bamenda. You can donate in church on Bamenda Sunday or securely via our Donate button on our website ([access here](#)). Standing order and new gift aid forms are also available on our website.

Most importantly, please remember to pray for the intentions of our brothers and sisters in Bamenda; and for the restoration of peace and justice in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Many thanks!

*Mary Lee, Acting Chair of the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee*

## Catholic Men Association (CMA)

Last year, we reported on the inauguration of the UK branch of the Catholic Men Association. The CMA is a Lay Apostolate Association whose members model their lives on St Joseph. Their motto is Service, Love & Humility.

A new year of formation began in September 2022 for aspirants, while the dedicated members continued attending meetings/prayer sessions, works of charity and other apostolates. The 2023 retreat was held in the St Bridgettine Convent in North Wales from 17-19 March, during which the rite of election took place for 8 aspirants. The 2023 dedication ceremony took place prayerfully during a joyful Cameroonian Mass in our cathedral, celebrated by Bishop Doyle, the Bishop Emeritus of Northampton. The rite inspired more Catholic men in attendance to take up this journey in the school of St Joseph.



CMA UK is also opening doors to Catholic men of other nationalities and cultures - some of the new members are from other countries such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe. There are now 19 dedicated members and more than 10 aspirants, all committed to active participation in the life of their respective parishes.

## Save The Date!

Please join Bishop Philip at  
St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth  
on Saturday 6 July 2024  
for a Mass to Celebrate the  
50th Anniversary of the  
Bamenda-Portsmouth Link  
All welcome!

## Where are they now?

This year, we welcomed Fr Benedict Ndikum to the Parish of St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs as Assistant Priest. We thank him for his willingness to serve in the Portsmouth Diocese and hope he enjoys his ministry among us.



Fr Joseph Tangka, whom Archbishop Andrew is also generously sending to us, still awaits the granting of a visa.

Please keep all the Bamenda priests serving in our Diocese in your prayers: Fr Elijah Fru Nde is Parish Priest of Christ the King & St Colman Bitterne and Hedge End & West End; Fr Emmanuel Rinda is Parish Priest of Corpus Christi & St Joseph's, Portsmouth; Fr Gaston Forbah Afah is Parish Priest of English Martyrs, Reading; Fr Anthony Chiatu is Parish Priest of Immaculate Conception, Portwood, Southampton. We thank them for their ministry to us.

## Supporting Teenage Single Mothers

The Archdiocesan Family Life Office was given a grant to run a project in 2022 to assist 70 teenage single mothers living in seven parishes in Bafut Deanery. The socio-political crisis and the imposition of spontaneous lockdowns impacted on the timescale of the delivery of the project, but it was successfully completed in November 2022 with the help of the members of the Family Apostolate Commission already operating in the Bafut Deanery and with the involvement of the Parish Priests with 100% attendance of participants recorded at all workshops and Masses.

The mothers attended six group/individual counselling sessions, covering: challenges for a single mother and how to overcome them; positive parenting; moral and spiritual life of a single mother; the participation of teenage single mothers in the life of the Church; and the creation of support groups in parishes. Three Masses were celebrated, with five sessions for spiritual direction. Thirty of the mothers were selected to undergo training on the production of 'improved powder soap', which they completed successfully. Materials were provided to enable 26 of them to continue with the production and sale of powder soap. Four of them were given funding to help them complete their hairdressing and dressmaking training, which they had already started before the project. The mothers were encouraged to meet regularly to support each other. Many of them reported that the counselling and spiritual direction sessions had influenced changes in their lifestyle. The support groups continue in the parishes and more mothers are registering.

Thank you for your donations enabling this important work to be undertaken!

## PPE for Health Personnel Dealing with Covid-19

Dr Promise Aseh Munteh, the Health Co-ordinator of Catholic Health Services in the Archdiocese of Bamenda, submitted his report on the use and effect of the funding we had sent to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for health personnel dealing with Covid 19 at the Catholic Health Centres and Hospitals throughout the Archdiocese.

The following supplies were purchased: medical face masks, examination gloves, aprons, hats, thermal flashes, hand sanitisers and hospital disinfectant.

Dr Promise reported that the incidence of Covid 19 infection among health personnel decreased after the provision of PPE, which was much appreciated by the staff. The PPE gave them the confidence to treat patients with Covid. Following the project, they have sensitised both health personnel and the general public about steps to take to reduce the risk of contracting Covid 19.



## Update from the Justice & Peace Commission



Last year, we funded a project to increase awareness of gender-based violence and how to combat it. Following the implementation of the programme, the Justice & Peace Commission has sadly received and managed 47 cases of gender-based violence in the first half of 2023. Sensitisation to the issue continues locally in communities.

In other work, the Commission has carried out prison monitoring visits and human rights monitoring and reporting. On 6 September, a new office for the Commission was opened in Mankon.

## Youth Ministry Update

Youth Ministry activities continue to receive enormous support from the youth of the Archdiocese! There are opportunities at deanery and diocesan level to be involved in a variety of spiritual, social and physical activities from retreats, pilgrimages, spiritual formation, deanery rallies and summer camps to the Archbishop's Champions' League.





## Spotlight on Ntenefor Mission Station:

When Fr Bernardine Nsom returned to Bamenda in October 2022, after serving us in the Portsmouth Diocese for nine years, Archbishop Andrew sent him to Ntenefor Mission Station to become Parish Priest of the new Parish of St Felix.

Before the Anglophone crisis, Ntenefor Mission Station was a rocky outcrop in a rural area on the outskirts of Bamenda town. A Catholic primary school, St Felix School, was built there with a capacity for 300 children.



Since the crisis began, the kidnapping and killing of people, particularly business people, civil servants and government officials, led to many people abandoning their homes and offices in other parts of the North-West Province and seeking refuge in Bamenda town, resulting in overcrowding. Many Internally Displaced People (IDPs) gravitated to the area of the Ntenefor Mission Station. With no end of the crisis in sight, the IDPs started to build homes in the neighbourhood and the population has risen to over 4,000, of whom 1,300+ are Catholics. This has in turn led to a significant rise in the primary school roll to 650, over double the roll for which the school was built, resulting in very crowded classrooms – 75 children in the nursery class and 97 Primary children in one classroom!

The teachers and pupils have been soldiering on and it is hoped that the school will be rebuilt or extended.

Archbishop Andrew visited in December 2022 to celebrate the official opening of St Felix Parish. There are daily Masses in the main parish church and two Masses on Sunday with over 1,200 Mass attendance.



Soon after arriving in the parish, Fr Bernardine started inviting students in his parish who were attending local public and private colleges which are not Catholic, to come to the Church for a Mass and to give him the opportunity to get to know them and discover how the parish could assist them as part of the Catholic family of Ntenefor. There was a good response with 130 attending! Many of them were IDPs.

The parish has been pulling together and developing plans for the long-term future of the site. There is no presbytery, so Fr Bernardine has been living in a house about two miles away from the church and the school, which has been generously provided for him by a friend until a presbytery can be built. Plans have been drawn up to build a presbytery, a parish hall, a larger school, some low-cost houses for rental, some shops, and offices for rental, which will combine to generate an income for the parish in the future, helping it to become self-reliant. There is also a need for toilets in the main parish church.

There is an acute water shortage in Bamenda – the water facility has not been updated and the town's population keeps increasing. Poor government policies on the environment in the past have resulted in deforestation, which has reduced the amount of water going into the soil. Most rainwater is lost through run-offs. Ntenefor is hilly and the water pressure is low. During the dry season, there is very little or no water. Wells and boreholes are needed.



Since the end of the last dry season, the parish has cleared the tough grass from around the site, tilled and levelled the ground to enable the planting of trees and turf to improve the environment and enable rainwater to be absorbed into the ground rather than running off.

## Focus on Fundraising:

In the last financial year ending 31 August 2023, our main source of income remained our annual Bamenda Sunday Appeal. Thank you for your generous donations, whether they were through a standing order or the second collection in your parish or via our Give As You Live page, which can be accessed via our website at [www.bamendaandportsmouth.com/donate.php](http://www.bamendaandportsmouth.com/donate.php).

We would like to thank the Jersey Catenian Circle for their continued generosity, raising £2,098 for Bamenda this year from their Circle. Funds were also raised across the Diocese during the year in a number of ways, which might give YOUR community some ideas for 2023-24:

### Bake Sale in Guernsey

Last year, Bamenda Sunday coincided with a cake sale arranged by the pupils of St Mary & St Michael Primary School to raise funds for their school after the Mass at Our Lady Star of the Sea in Guernsey.

However, after they heard Liz Dene, a member of the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee, give the Bamenda Sunday Appeal and how just £30 would pay school fees for a pupil at a rural primary school for a year in the Archdiocese of Bamenda, they asked their head teacher, Helen Willetts, if the money they'd raised, £103.02, could be sent to Bamenda instead of pay the school fees for 3 primary school children to attend school - many thanks for their generosity and inspiring example of selflessness!



### Learning about Bamenda Life

St Edmund's Catholic Secondary School, Portsmouth is twinned with St John Paul II Comprehensive College (JOPACC), Wum. Every academic year, Year 8 in St Edmund's learns about Catholic Social Teaching in their RE lessons and is taught about their sister-school in Bamenda. Students had no idea what the day would hold for them but arrived enthusiastic and willing to support in any way they could. They had been encouraged to wear a colour to represent the Green, Red and Yellow of the Cameroon Flag to show their support.

During the day, students completed activities studying Bamenda, learning about the difficulties the people face daily and the life they live. Students designed the city of Bamenda, considering amenities they would include within a set budget, focusing on education, clean water and safe homes. They produced excellent cities and also wrote postcards for the children of one of the local schools.

Students spent the last hour running laps of the school playground to raise money from sponsorships of how far they could go. As a year group, they raised £412.21 - a great effort! St Edmund's looks forward to continuing to support JOPACC every year at school!

### "Walk to Bamenda!"

We are also grateful to our Guernsey Community for another great fundraising initiative, engaging parishioners of all ages!

When Fr Gaston was an Assistant Priest in Guernsey, he promoted consideration of Laudato Si initiatives, drawing to the attention of parishioners the plight of communities in Bamenda affected by deforestation and without access to a clean water supply, encouraging them to consider raising money for a borehole to provide a water source for portable water on the Ntenefor Mission Station, described overleaf.

In Lent 2023, Guernsey parishioners undertook a sponsored walk around the island, equivalent to walking to Bamenda! This amazing effort raised £10,200 to be split equally between Bamenda to support their brothers and sisters at St Felix Parish, Ntenefor, and CAFOD. Congratulations and sincere thanks to all the participants, including Fr Inna, Assistant Priest, who raised some £3,000 in sponsorship!





## Challoner Celebrates Diversity 2023!

Mrs Teresa Cripps, Chaplain at Bishop Challoner School, Basingstoke writes:

"It was a joy and a privilege to be part of our into evening celebration of our Diversity superpowers here at Bishop Challoner on the 15th June. From amazing cultural dresses and dances, to henna, Polish crafts and inspiring spoken words – it was a day to remember and hold onto. Songs and dances from around the world, plus music on the piano and even a chance to vote for the Best British Biscuit; it was all there. In the evening, we had the additional joy of a variety of world foods, all eagerly enjoyed by students and families alike. A huge thank you to all who made this possible!"

Some of the day's activities allowed students to raise much-needed funds for our sister-school, St Bede's College in Ashing Kom, totalling £753.

For the first time at Bishop Challoner, we held a cultural runway, which involved anyone aligned with a different nation joining with others to walk (accompanied by a cultural song of their choice) across the red carpet, onto the stage and off again. A number of staff found it an incredibly moving experience to see the level of support all students expressed to one another as over 20 nations represented came forward, with their flags to join the runway. Our new Diversity Student Leaders look forward to carrying on this great experience across the next academic year.

*How wonderful and pleasant it is when people live together in harmony! - Psalm 133: 1*



**DIVERSITY IS A SUPERPOWER IN OUR COMMUNITY!**  
...and we are celebrating it!!  
WEAR YOUR TRADITIONAL DRESS!  
THURSDAY 15TH JUNE 2023 5.30-7PM  
Art refreshments Henna poetry speeches Songs, music and dance  
You are all invited to pop along and celebrate the joy and gifts of diversity here!  
All monies raised go to our sister school, St Bedes in Bamenda!



## Donations and Legacies:

Please consider remembering the CDP Bamenda Commission in your will or as a charity for tribute donations instead of flowers at your funeral. Any sum can make a real difference to the life of someone in Bamenda! We are very grateful to Michael Dene MBE, formerly a Commissioner on Guernsey's Overseas Aid & Development Commission, who died on 5 January 2023 and generously gave a bequest of £10,000.  
*May he rest in peace.*

## Contact the Bamenda Portsmouth Committee:

If you have any queries or ideas for developing or celebrating the 50th Anniversary of our link with the Archdiocese of Bamenda or if you are interested in serving on the Portsmouth Bamenda Committee, please email:

Acting Chair, Mary Lee: [mlee@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:mlee@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)  
Treasurer, Denis Murtagh: [dmurtagh@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk](mailto:dmurtagh@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk)

Other Committee contacts are listed on the Contact page of our website:  
[www.bamendaandportsmouth.com](http://www.bamendaandportsmouth.com)

