

## Diocese of Angola Visit in June 2018

I visited the Diocese of Angola from 7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018 in my role as Bishop of Angola's Commissary in the UK and on behalf of ALMA London and MANNA. There were three main parts of the visit: attending an extraordinary synod, visiting the health centre in Lobito and school in Benguela, and participating in a strategic planning workshop with Bishop André, diocesan staff and partners. Several other meetings and conversations and church visits took place around these events; they too contributed to my sense of being encouraged through the visit, and helped strengthen relationships and support the mission of God.

### Extraordinary Synod



The synod was held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June to consider the process of the Anglican Church in Angola changing from being a missionary diocese to become a full and autonomous diocese.

Bishop Stephen Diseko, Provincial Dean of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, and Bishop Carlos Matsinhe from Lebombo had been appointed to lead the process, and had been in Angola for a week to see the life of the church. The experience of travelling through Uíge increased awareness within the province of the need for multiplication. Angola is five times the size of the UK yet is one diocese - with one over-travelled bishop!

The Provincial Dean spoke about two previous missionary dioceses having become full dioceses, with their missionary bishops becoming diocesan bishop, in Namibia and Lesotho, and the creation of missionary dioceses being an ongoing process with Lurio (now to be called Nampula) in Mozambique being next. After much deliberation, the Synod agreed:

1. This extraordinary synod approves the missionary diocese of Angola becoming a full and autonomous diocese of Angola.
2. That the current bishop of the missionary diocese of Angola automatically becomes the diocesan bishop of the new diocese of Angola.
3. That his successors will be elected by the Diocese of Angola in accordance with the canons, statutes and internal regulations of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.
4. This synod respectfully requests the Archbishop of Cape Town and the Synod of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa to subscribe to the desire of the Anglican people of Angola.

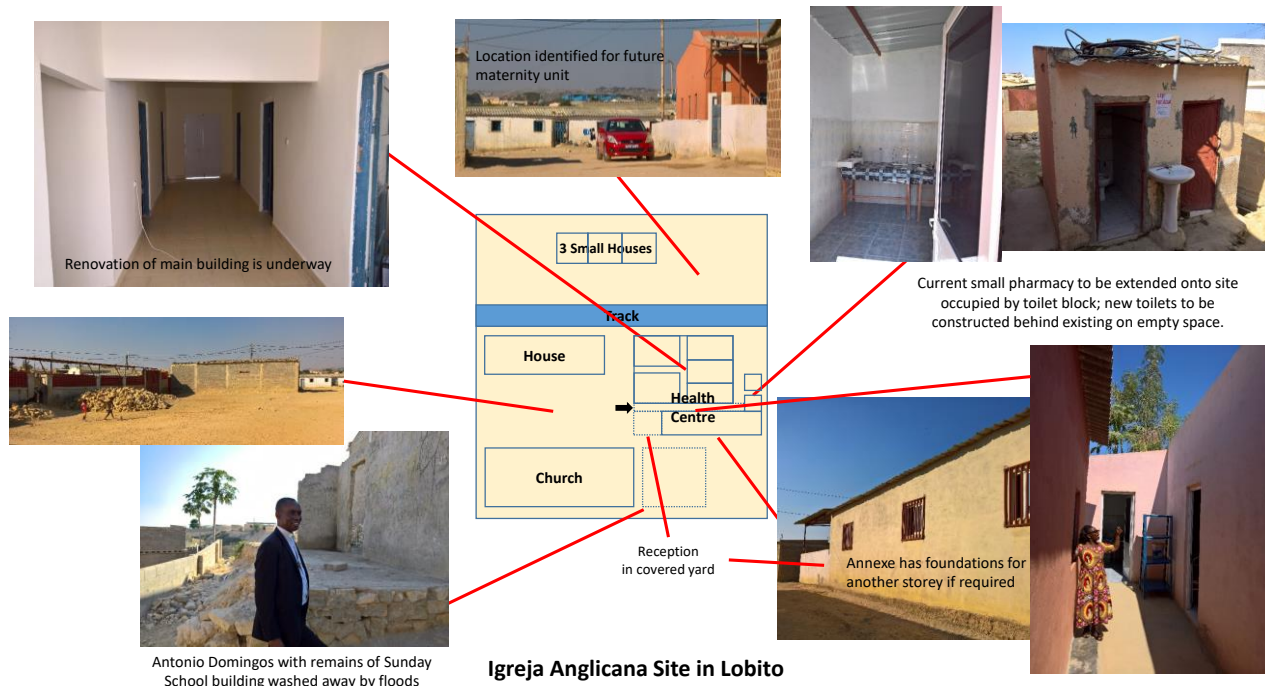
This resolution passed by 66–0–3 in the House of Laity, 68–0–0 in the House of Clergy, and 1–0–0 in the House of Bishop. The mind of the Synod was very clear that becoming an autonomous diocese is fundamental to their sense of identity as an Anglican Church and to their vision for multiplication.

The next step is for the Synod of Bishops to consider the request. This is due to happen on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 11am (10am BST) alongside a report from Bishops Stephen and Carlos. If it is approved, there is likely to be an inauguration of the full diocese with Archbishop Thabo next year - with much celebration!

### Lobito

With Silva José (Community Development Projects Finance Officer) and Maria Domingos (ALMA Link Officer), I visited Lobito on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June. We went to see the refurbishment of the Nora Sturges health centre in Lobito which is supported through MANNA by the family and friends of Nora Sturges (mother of Molly Dow), and to develop jointly a financial plan to complete the work.

The health centre serves the community of Bairro Alto Esperança in the hills above the town. Alto Esperança is a poor community with the wonderful name of high hope! The church building and health centre are adjacent, as shown in this outline plan.



Malaria is particularly high in Lobito and Benguela between January and March due to the rainy season. After this peak period, and receipt of funds, work started on rehabilitation of the health centre. The diocese is committed to transforming the health centre and this work is progressing diligently and effectively.

“The development is important for us and the community, and for nurses. Things are being improved slowly, but not enough [yet], and we also need to study. There is not [currently] enough to sustain life and to increase the level of our training. There are no complaints about the new administrator; things are going well”.<sup>1</sup>



Operation of the centre has been transformed since the appointment of António Domingos as centre administrator and Francisca Paulo as administrative assistant; it is also clear that the staff have confidence in the leadership being provided.

The level of commitment and patience being shown by staff working without salaries is out of the ordinary. It is highly desirable for all concerned that the centre reopens in as short a space of time as possible. That said, staging the required investment is necessary due to the availability of funds, but it is clear that the investment should be done at pace.

## Benguela

On Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June we went to see the school in Benguela which has been built with support through ALMA from the Diocese of London, the parish of St John the Baptist, Pinner, and the family and friends of Rose Thompson, who was the ALMA Parish Representative and the catalyst that enabled the project to happen. The school director expressed the appreciation of the local church to us:

“We are happy for the support which church members have been giving for the help of our school. There is still work to finish but everywhere is good. The first proposal was for 4 classrooms but we built 5 and now have 10. The Education Ministry requires a higher number of classrooms to support education.”

<sup>1</sup> We met with all the staff, several members of staff made inputs including this one.



10 classrooms have been built: 8 are in use by 804 children and 44 teachers  
 Remaining 2 classrooms, admin block and toilet block to be completed  
 Funds in hand to complete offices and toilets: additional funds needed to complete classrooms



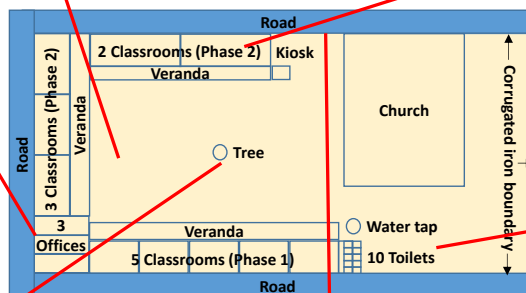
Walls for 3 offices have been built:  
 Roof, floor, electricity and painting to do



School Secretary's Office currently under tree

Water collects in the middle of the site due to ground being sand and sloping: water attracts mosquitoes

Higher foundations for Phase 2 classrooms to avoid water ingress from ponding on site: cost exceeded budget thus builder ran out of funds to complete classrooms floor and electricity



Security issues: theft arising from open access to site, stones thrown at external classroom windows  
 NB All 3 blocks of classrooms face roads



10 toilets have been built:  
 5 with inside access and  
 5 with external doors  
 Fittings to be completed



Ministry of Education now requires  
 12 classrooms for recognition: Church  
 is pushing for recognition with 10

S. Barnabé Site in Benguela

## Partnership

After our return to Luanda, there was a strategic planning meeting with Bishop André, diocesan officers and staff, and partners. The timing of this visit had been synchronised between ALMA and MANNA in the UK, Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD) and JC Flowers Foundation in the US. This meant that in addition to myself representing ALMA and MANNA; Tammi Mott, ERD Director of Institution Strengthening and Rebecca Vander Meulen, JC Flowers Senior Director of Cross-Border Malaria Initiative, were also in Luanda.

Bishop André set the scene with a reflection on the work of Nehemiah in rebuilding Jerusalem, "He mobilised the people for the objective" (Nehemiah 2.11-18). This is exactly what happened. In a creative process, participants identified what had happened in the history of the Anglican Church, received reports on what is happening now - including implementation of schools with ALMA - and dreamt dreams of what they would like to see happening in the next five years. The output was the outline of the next diocesan strategic plan which is now being finalised under the leadership of Alves Alexandre, diocesan secretary.



## Christ the Redeemer (Cristo Redentor)



On my last day, I was delighted to visit Cristo Redentor, which is twinned with St Lawrence, Eastcote.

In these photos of their choirs, I hope you see something of how alive this parish church is.



Through this report, I hope you have seen something of how Christ is alive in the Anglican Church in Angola.

## John Tasker

Bishop of Angola's Commissary in the UK