

Lent lecture taster: Ethiopia

25 February 2014



As a taster for St James Finchampstead's LENT WELL SPENT programme, Canon John Edwards gave a talk entitled 'On the edge – The Anglican Church in Ethiopia'.

John, who had visited Ethiopia last December with Andrew and Janice Proud (the Bishop of Reading and his wife), and members of Ascot's All Saints Church, talked about the group's experiences in Ethiopia's Gambella Region. He described how the influx of refugees from South Sudan into the Region had brought Anglicanism with it, and that there are now 70 Anglican churches (albeit only 20 with church buildings), with 16 local clergy and 90 lay ministers in the area. Some of these churches are located within refugee camps.

The group stayed at Gambella's Anglican Centre, which officially opened in November 2010. The Centre currently hosts the St Barnabas' congregation, although a new church building is planned (to be located on a rocky outcrop in the centre of the complex). It contains a library, and runs sports and agricultural programmes, as well as hosting community groups. It is a training centre for local clergy (2-3 days each month), and also local Mothers' Union (MU) which is actively engaged in the literacy programmes, many church activities, practical help, prayer and visits to the sick.

With an average life expectancy in the upper 40's, and considering the many hardships endured – especially for those who have fled the violence in South Sudan and are living in refugee camps - the peoples of this Region incredibly find much to give thanks for and demonstrate this in their own styles of joyful worship.