



The Archbishop of Canterbury will be visiting South Sudan with Pope Francis and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland from 3rd to 5th February.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has urged people to pray for the people of South Sudan ahead of his historic joint visit to the country with the Pope and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

The Archbishop said the church leaders are making their Pilgrimage of Peace to South Sudan “as servants” to “amplify the cries of the South Sudanese people” who continue to suffer from conflict, flooding and famine.

The Archbishop will be visiting South Sudan with the Holy Father, Pope Francis, and the Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields from 3rd to 5th February. The unprecedented Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Peace is part of the Pope’s Apostolic Journey to the DRC and South Sudan which begins on Tuesday 31st January.

During the South Sudan visit the three church leaders will meet the country’s political leaders, hold an open-air ecumenical prayer vigil for peace and meet with people displaced by the conflict.

The Archbishop will be accompanied in South Sudan by his wife, Mrs Caroline Welby, who has made several previous visits to South Sudan to support women in the Church in their role as peacebuilders, particularly the wives of South Sudan’s Anglican bishops and archbishops.

Mrs Welby said today that the women of South Sudan are “incredible women of strength”, many of whom bear the trauma of displacement, sexual violence and the daily fear of mistreatment in their own communities.

Archbishop Justin Welby said today:

“I am profoundly grateful to be visiting the people of South Sudan with my dear brothers in Christ, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, and the Rt Rev Dr Iain Greenshields, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. We have prayed for many years for this visit – and we now look forward to being in Juba together in only a few days’ time.

Our visit is a Pilgrimage of Peace. We come as servants – to listen to and amplify the cries of the South Sudanese people, who have suffered so much and continue to suffer because of conflict, devastating flooding, widespread famine and much more. Over the past three years and even since July, violence has intensified in many parts of the country. We hope to review and renew the commitments made by South Sudanese leadership at the Vatican in 2019, and the commitments they have made to their people since then.

We come as brothers in Christ to worship together and witness to the God who reconciles us. The communities of South Sudan have a legacy of powerful witness to their faith. Through working together, they have been a sign and instrument of the reconciliation God desires for their whole country and all of creation. We hope to build on and reenergise that legacy.

This will be a historic visit. After centuries of division, leaders of three different parts of the Church are coming together in an unprecedented way,

and in so doing are seeking to be part of answering another prayer – Jesus’ prayer – that his followers might be one – "ut unum sint" (John: 17). We come as followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, knowing that his Holy Spirit is at work in South Sudan and has the power to transform hearts. His love and welcome are on offer to all. It is through him that we find our deepest peace and our most profound hopes for justice. And so I ask you to pray with us for the people of South Sudan."

Mrs Caroline Welby said today:

"I have worked and worshipped with many of the women in South Sudan and find myself humbled by their stories. They have borne the grief of war and carry the responsibility to provide for their families. Many of them live with the trauma of displacement in their own country, refugees in other countries, sexual violence and the daily fear of mistreatment in their own homes and communities.

And yet they are also incredible women of strength, praising God and coming to him for their refreshment. It is a privilege to walk alongside them, and I pray that their example is held up in South Sudan and around the world.

Women around the world so often bear the scars of conflict in deeply profound, often unseen, ways. Women who have brought life into this world, nurtured children and provided spiritual guidance for their communities have the pain of witnessing lives torn apart.

God creates each life and gives it unique value, potential and purpose according to his will. It is often our physical and spiritual mothers who see that. Which means it is powerful when women unite and their voices are heard. It can be the start of healing and restoration. Please pray with me for the women and men of South Sudan – for unity, for understanding, and for just peace."

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