



Archbishop Justin Welby meets and prays with communities dealing with Ebola during visit to Freetown and Tintafor.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, visited Sierra Leone yesterday with a message of hope and solidarity for all those suffering amid the Ebola outbreak across West Africa.

The Archbishop preached at St George's Cathedral in the Sierra Leonean capital of Freetown before visiting a church-run centre for children affected by Ebola.

He also met and prayed with faith and community leaders, including the Bishop of Freetown, the Rt Revd Thomas Arnold Ikunika Wilson.

Sierra Leone has the highest number of Ebola cases in West Africa, with more than 8,000 cases and nearly 2,500 deaths since the start of the outbreak. Latest figures show that 1,258 people have survived the virus and recovered.

In his sermon Archbishop Justin told those gathered that “your suffering and endurance across the afflicted countries have echoed around the world”, adding that “you are remembered at every moment by God”.

[Read the Archbishop's sermon in Freetown](#)

[Watch the BBC report on the Archbishop in Sierra Leone](#)

Stressing the solidarity of Christians and Muslims in England for those suffering in West Africa, he said: “In our churches and mosques... we pray for you, long for good news, and are in pain because of your pain.

“I was anxious to share with you the grief that is experienced in this region and especially in Sierra Leone, a country that has already faced such grief and suffering over the years.”

Just as Jesus was born and lived among the poor and suffering, he said, “so must the world come alongside you to support the doctors, hospitals, and volunteers and people of this land who seek to love those caught by Ebola.

The Archbishop also praised medical volunteers travelling to West Africa and urged the British government to continue its “courageous” response to the outbreak.

After the Cathedral service the Archbishop met with children affected by Ebola being cared for at the Don Bosco Interim Care Centre in Tintafor.

The centre, which is run by the Catholic order of Salesians of Don Bosco, provides services including trauma healing, stress reduction, musical and sport therapy, and individual and group counselling. It also provides non-formal school lessons, family tracing and appropriate reunifications with follow-up visits.

Archbishop Justin said he prayed that communities afflicted by Ebola would find comfort and hope from each other – and from God who is “especially faithful” to those “suffering unjustly through the events of life”.

Looking ahead to Christmas, the Archbishop said that if asked what the most important part of the Advent season has been for him, he will say it was being with people in Sierra Leone and in South Sudan, which he visited last week.

“Your presence is a generous gift, of which I am entirely unworthy. Your faces will be before me in my mind on Christmas day. Your needs will be in my prayers.

“But far more importantly you are remembered at every moment by God, who is faithful and will bring comfort.”

Throughout Archbishop Justin Welby's short visit to Sierra Leone he followed appropriate infection control procedures. As with others returning from the affected countries, his risk of exposure to Ebola has been carefully assessed by a clinician in accordance with Public Health England's latest guidelines.

In light of this, having been allocated to the lowest category of risk, he has been advised that no restrictions on his movements or activities are necessary and he will be continuing with his planned commitments over the coming days.

Notes

- The Diocese of Chichester is running an emergency appeal for churches in West Africa. Find out more and donate here:

<http://www.chichester.anglican.org/harvest-appeal/>

- Find out more about the churches' response to the Ebola crisis by visiting [the Anglican Alliance website](#).

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