



Dear Colleagues,

Harvest Appeal in Response to the Drought and Famine in Kenya

I am writing in response to the terrible drought and famine conditions being experienced in the Horn of Africa. The situation in Ethiopia and Somalia is now well known and I know many individuals and parishes will already have sent donations through one of the major aid agencies. Thank you for doing so.

News is now reaching us of the worsening situation in Kenya where four of our five Companion Dioceses are already affected. Canon Roger Matthews reported on what he saw at the end of July when he represented us at the inauguration of the new Diocese of Marsabit in Northern Kenya. "In the Diocese of Embu there has been some rain but not enough to produce a full crop and there are some parishes where the crops have failed entirely – at present the diocese is able to provide food aid themselves. The Dioceses of Meru and Mbeere are more badly affected and already need assistance from outside. The new Diocese of Marsabit is in the greatest need as crops have failed entirely and animals are already dying. The new bishop and his clergy are getting a near constant stream of local people asking for help with food."

Those affected by famine will need at least six months support. Those farmers who have not been able to harvest a crop in August will now have to wait – and pray - for the autumn rains in October and November. If the rains are good enough, the next harvest will be in January or February next year.

The local Mount Kenya East Christian Community Services (CCS) organisation is working across all our companion dioceses to direct aid to the most needy people and places. They have received funds from Christian Aid and are already working on projects to provide:

- Emergency water tanks and distributing water to villages experiencing the worst of the drought conditions
- Maintaining and repairing existing boreholes, and
- Distributing animal feed to protect livestock that are so crucial to people's livelihoods.

May I ask you to consider raising awareness of the plight of our brothers and sisters in Kenya around the time of your parish harvest festivals? I know that many of you will already have made plans but if there is scope for adding a Kenyan dimension to your harvest celebrations, I would be very grateful. Gifts can be sent to: Mrs Mary Kersys at the Diocesan Offices, cheques should be made payable to '**Chelmsford DBF**'. All the money received will go to support famine and drought relief in Kenya through the work of CCS via Christian Aid. The Appeal will remain open until the end of November.

While writing, can I add my thanks to all who have supported this year's Bishop's Lent Appeal. I am delighted that my first appeal has produced a record response of £34,000 and money is still coming in. This is a remarkable result and is enabling the new Diocese of Marsabit to make real progress with their mission plans. They have already ordered five new motorbikes for their clergy and will be able to start work on water harvesting and church building projects very soon. All this will help in building sustainable and resilient communities in a harsh situation. With such a generous response to the appeal, Bishop Rob Martin now has extra funds that he can use for training new evangelists, pastoral workers and clergy!

I will be making my first visit to Kenya in October and look forward to giving you a first-hand report on the work done by CCS and our companion dioceses on my return. In the meantime, I thank God for the wonderful generosity of our church members and pray that despite our own economic gloom we will continue to be mindful of the needs of others.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Stephen