

## A Brief History of the Buyé – Edmonton Diocesan Partnership

*Prepared for Lambeth 2022*

Shortly after her consecration in 2008, Bishop Jane Alexander of Edmonton diocese in Alberta, Canada, attended the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Lambeth Conference, where she met and prayed with then Bishop Sixbert Macumi of Buyé diocese in Burundi (he has since been installed as the 5th Archbishop and Primate in Burundi).

The partnership between the two dioceses was made official in 2009 when Bishop Sixbert first visited Edmonton. He and Bishop Jane signed an agreement “to walk together, to uphold each other in prayer and to work for the Kingdom of God in Buyé and in Edmonton.”

Since then, there have been several visits back and forth. Bishop Sixbert, his wife Clotilde Muhimpunda, and others visited Edmonton in 2012, 2014 and 2018, visiting parishes and sampling many facets of urban and rural life in western Canada. In 2012, 2014 and 2017, contingents from Edmonton visited Buyé, doing the same.

Mutual prayer support and the ability to connect and to learn about and from each other have been among the greatest blessings of this partnership. As well, the two dioceses have found that in some situations, a relatively small contribution of finances from Canada can make an enormous difference in Burundi. One example is what has become an annual collection amongst Edmonton parishes called “\$5-5Ways.” Through the month of September, parishioners donate \$5 at their church coffee hours (though not in person during the COVID-19 pandemic). \$5 in Canadian currency buys a year’s worth of medical coverage in Buyé. Funds collected in Edmonton are directed to the Buyé Mothers Union, which is connected to those most in need and distributes medical cards accordingly.

Community water projects are another example. Buyé diocese is blessed with many freshwater springs, but without construction around the springs bringing the water up through pipes, the water is easily contaminated. These simple construction projects provide maximum benefit for a small price. Several were undertaken from 2016-2019. When Bishop Jane stepped down in 2021, a gift given in her name allowed construction of 19 more.

Collaborative efforts by members of both dioceses, including the Anglican Church Women and Buyé Mothers’ Union, have provided the people of Buyé with mosquito nets to reduce the spread of malaria, and essential medical equipment and supplies. The dioceses worked with PWRDF to build an HIV/AIDS clinic and expand the Buyé Hospital maternity and pediatric wards. The Diocese of Edmonton also provided Dignity Kits to help young women stay in school, and equipped clergy and lay catechists by enabling the Buyé Bible College to open its doors to new students.

As mentioned, Buyé and Edmonton dioceses support each other in prayer. Every four months the two dioceses collaborate to keep prayer cycles updated with the names of the rectors in each parish and those in particular areas of ministry, in order to remember each other in the Prayers of the People each Sunday, and in individual and corporate prayer during the week.

Since 2013, parishes and individuals in particular types of ministries (hospital or educational chaplaincies, for example) in Buyé diocese have been “twinned” with parishes and individuals in similar ministries in Edmonton. Buyé diocese requested that fundraising activities should remain diocese-to-diocese rather than parish-to-parish, but other suggested activities include:

- Praying regularly for the partner parish and the pastor
- Sharing each other’s stories, our joys and our challenges
- Receiving each other’s stories with joy and compassion.

In September 2021, the Rt. Rev. Stephen London was consecrated as the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Edmonton. Archbishop Sixbert sent his greetings and assurance of his prayers. Bishop Stephen looks forward to meeting Archbishop Sixbert in person when that is possible and to the continuation of this partnership. He believes it has been a great example of fellowship and cooperation between Anglican churches.