

## Good luck Nigeria

I like Nigerians. They are positive, outward going, and always looking ahead. They are also very strong. I said to one Nigerian friend “You guys are strong. You could start a fight in an empty room!”

The Nation is divided between the Muslim north, with Sharia law in at least 6 states, and the Christian south, although there are Christians and Muslims everywhere.

Recently, we have seen the emergence of a fundamentalist Islamic stream, doubtless being fed from further north - Boko Haram. They have already killed many people - mostly Christians, although bombs have no faith or conscience, and as usual, the killers don't really care who they kill.

This has raised the tension in Nigeria, and inevitably, Christian hotheads have bombed mosques. This upward spiral has no end, and achieves nothing, as we all know (See Russia and Chechnya) but the human mind can be exceedingly blind, especially when blinded by fanaticism.

No one envies President “Good Luck Jonathan”, but he has made some unusual moves recently, He announced yesterday that “Boko Haran” adherents can be found in his government, in his military and his various ministries. It's hard to fathom the purpose of this statement. It causes anxiety in the citizens, and makes them wonder whether the President is really on top of things. He is probably right in what he says, but is he wise to say it, especially in the light of the current general strike.

The strike is, overtly, about fuel prices. The government subsidises fuel prices heavily. Free marketers may groan, but the whole country depends on fuel for its travel - travel to work that is. And food and supplies are distributed by road. A fuel price rise is, therefore, very challenging to all. As usual, it has been done in the African way – it all goes up at once! Nothing ever gets done gradually in Africa.

The citizens are, naturally, unhappy - hardly surprising. But it's what happens next which gives cause for concern. Sub Saharan Africans have been watching the “Arab spring.” They are unhappy with President Goodluck. Putting two and

two together, some may be thinking “Let’s topple this government by people power, as the Arabs have done.”

If that happens, then other Africans in other sub Saharan countries might begin to think that their lot is a bad one, and follow suit. Before we know it, Sub Saharan Africa will be on fire with civil strife, repression, violence and even civil war.

There is always an undercurrent of violence and aggression in Africa. It was their way of living for centuries, and the more democratic way of life which is seen now merely overlays this aggressive spirit. The unrest in Nigeria could stay within its borders, or we could be seeing the beginning of an orgy of violence, continent wide, which will ultimately bring Africa back into the dark ages - and drag many countries down with it. China should take careful note.

Time to worry? Time to pray?

Rev Jim Smith is Director of the Serving Africa Mission. He has been working in Africa for nearly 30 years. He has a large base for his work just outside Accra, Ghana.