

PROFILES

Name: Alphonse Daudet Touna

Country of origin: Cameroon

Age: 42

Profession: Musician, composer, instrument maker.
Music director at St

Nicholas of Tolentino parish, Bristol.

Date of arrival in England: 2003.

Experience of England: The biggest surprise was the cold. I arrived in the summer and it was really cold, though psychologically I was prepared for this. What I don't like is when it is cold, windy, wet and damp. I don't mind it now when it just cold, but all four things I find hard! I have found it easy to make friends in England.

Faith journey: The welcome I received in this parish was a big surprise, and I have really grown spiritually through its support. Fr Richard, the parish priest, approached me when I had just arrived and spoke little English. He offered to help me with support and advice. I have set up a little company providing resources for the community, and teaching people to make African instruments and promote African culture through the arts. I go into schools, and Fr Richard allowed me to run workshop here in the parish. I wanted to set up a choir here, when I arrived there was just a pianist. Fr Richard made an announcement at Mass about starting the choir, and the first week only one woman came but slowly it grew and we formed the one world choir, called Salo Pamoja, which is Swahilli for praying and working together. We sing songs from our countries which include Congo, Burundi and Kenya. My family in Cameroon is very Catholic, my father is the chief catechist in our village and leads the liturgy when the priest is not available to come there. God has been a serious part of my journey.

Parish life is like life in any community. It is not easy. What is good is the diversity: here I've met people I could not have met at home in Cameroon, not only from Britain and other African countries but from other countries as well. Foreigners struggle when they are here, you don't feel stable. You feel that anything can happen to you at any time. A few weeks ago, many people were taken from our parish, some of them have been deported. That can create psychological fear that spreads. I've been fighting to be here: when my visa finishes I have to fight to renew it.

