

YOU HAVE BROUGHT HOPE TO US

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The Roof Is on the School Building

We arrived in our little compound late in the evening. It was full of children and teachers as well as community leaders and others waiting for us and singing to us. Welcomes and ceremonies are very important in the

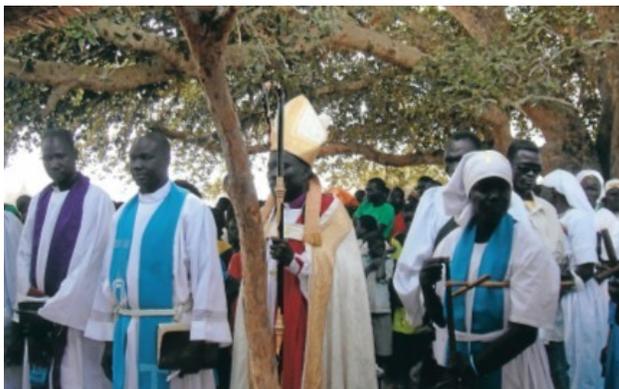


local culture. As we listened to many formal welcomes and introductions, I became totally distracted by the moon reflecting off the tin roof of the school! How could it be? I knew that the money that we had sent was not enough to finish the roof as the price originally quoted was only a fraction of the current cost due to runaway inflation. What I didn't know was that the local leaders in our compound had pooled the money they

had made from a five-month contract with an anti-malaria campaign sponsored by an NGO from Juba and used it to finish the roof. Another surprise waiting for us was the tukels with beds and mosquito nets that they had made for us to sleep in! We were able to put our tents aside and sleep in a real bed.

A Glorious Celebration under the Trees

What a joy to celebrate on Sunday with Bishop Abraham Nhial, who had traveled from Aweil to join us. People walked for hours from surrounding areas to worship with us.



Following the service, the Bishop confirmed many new members in the church.

Our students were well represented, and some of the youth performed a skit that spoke of the pain and suffering of war as well as ultimate forgiveness and reconciliation.

Near the conclusion of the service, the Bishop and elders prayed over our team and for the upcoming week we would spend in the community. It was a powerful prayer, like a sweet rain on a parched and groaning land that had seen so much bloodshed.

“You have brought hope to us”

We began to understand what this really means during two different visits of government officials. One official told of the time in 2007 when the people of the area were told that there were plans to build a clinic in the area with the help of some Christians a world away in America. He said that the response was “That could never happen. Why would some crazy white person a world away want to come and help us? Even our government officials have never been out here.”



The clinic became a reality and now the government officials have come. Deng Deng from the Juba office of the Vice President of South Sudan came with a camera crew. Deng had not been out to the area since 1983 when he fled as a young boy and walked all the way to Ethiopia. He had not been back because there

was nothing to go back to. He showed up to film our clinic, school and the surrounding buildings that the locals have put up and to film conversations with our team. He said that if we could come from so far away, the government must come and help. He pledged to do all that he could to entice the government to help with an agriculture project in the area to help the community begin to be self-sufficient.

The community elders and chief chose a new and neutral name for our community. Jorbich, the name we have been using, is actually the name of a community across the river. All of the other little villages in the area had been wiped out by the militia that came on horseback from Darfur. So they wanted to find a neutral name not previously used for a community.

They chose “Akuak Rak,” which means “stream” and “fruit”. There is a river nearby where people came to drink and a tree where people also came to eat the fruit. No one group can claim this name. It will be a place of refuge and new beginnings where the people can start over...

Our medical team worked tirelessly through long hours each day. They were determined to attend to everyone who had waited all day in the hot sun to be seen by Dr. Michael. The team worked out a smooth operation to diagnose and treat the patients and dispense medicines. They treated some serious cases of wounds, infections, advanced cases of TB, and other ailments. I cringe to think of what the outcome would have been if our medical team had not been there at this time.

However, we had to face the limitations of what we could do. A young woman was brought into our clinic late one evening by a member of her family and a friend who owned a motorbike. She was clearly already dying when she arrived. Dr. Michael did all



that he could but had little to go on. It was impossible to even diagnose what the problem had been. The young woman had had a high fever and seizures for a couple of days. Unfortunately, she died during the night.



Facing this situation and many others, we knew we had to pray the prayer we use to be cut free from carrying a burden we are not meant to bear after ministering to someone in our prayer ministry. It includes: “The sickness that

we encounter is more than our humanity can bear.”

Old Pain in the Midst of New Beginnings

Before leaving for the trip, I had a vision of spending quality time with our orphan children, especially those who had been orphaned and enslaved by the Darfurian Mujahedeen on horseback who wiped out the villages in the area, killing the men and dragging the women and children off to slavery in Darfur.



I also wanted each child to know how special he or she is to us, that we care and are aware of their pain, and that the Lord cares. I prayed individually with each child and gave each warm hugs, something that the children are not accustomed to. I can really feel the Lord's deep love for them.

I also documented the stories of twelve of the children redeemed from slavery. This was a gut-wrenching experience, almost more than I could process. One child, little Mary Adior, is the youngest and only survivor from a family of six. As Mary's father, along with other men, tried to stop the raiders before they could enter their village of Gori, they were all killed. Then Mary's mother was killed when the militia entered the village and Mary and her three siblings were captured. The other three eventually tried to escape and were shot. Mary was only around 5 but was kept in the north for two years. Most of the children in our compound were redeemed from slavery by Christian Solidarity International, but in a strange twist of events, a Darfurian man who had known Mary's father through a business arrangement for grazing his cattle in the South, saw and recognized Mary to be the child of this man. He negotiated with her slave master for her release and some Southerners brought her back to the South.

Documenting the children's' stories put me face to face with the reality of what outreach to the Darfurians, now in their own suffering at the hands of Khartoum, really means in terms of forgiveness and grace. Just as I was finishing with the disturbing details of the children's' experiences, it was announced that the Darfurian leaders had arrived. They had ridden for hours on donkeys to greet us and thank us for the aid we had sent to them in the bush in Western Aweil where they have fled from the atrocities being carried out in Darfur. I admit that I had to stop and gain my composure and ask the Lord for His grace. I did not feel it at that moment. However, I knew that if the people who had suffered at the hands of the Darfurians could extend their hand, then I must as well.



Needs and Prayer requests:

Even though there has been progress, there is still much to be done. Please pray for our Leaders on the ground in Sudan, for the children and for their outreach to the Darfurians.

We need funds to:

- *Provide more food and clothing and accommodations for the children.
- *Send teachers for more training
- * Provide windows, doors, and chalkboards for the school building
- *Provide fencing around the school and housing for the children for security
- *Provide sports equipment, shoes and uniforms
- *Meet the many requests for tuition for pastors and secondary students to study in Kenya.
- *Continue to reach out to the Darfurians through medicines and veterinary supplies