

Sudan prayer letter 2

Hi everyone.

We have now been a week into our trip and what a week it has been. We made it to Mundri after an 8 hour drive to cover 115 miles on Saturday. The journey took us back to the bridge and third time lucky, we got across the ford. Unbeknown to us an equally big barrier awaited us at a place called Buagyi. The road was the worst imaginable and the 8 hours were spent bouncing around the inside of a Landcruiser, but when we got to Buagyi, the road became something like the Somme. The tankers and lorries had turned the road into deep channels of mud, reinforced by the monsoon like rain of the day before. We saw a lorry and a car in one trench and the roof of the car was at ground level. Some of the vehicles will be there for days, literally, until the ground dries out. So the task for 4 wheel drives is to pick a way across this area, missing or crossing the trenches horizontally. It probably took us about an hour to do a hundred yards or so. Our biggest fear when we got here was that we would not be able to get back - if the rains continue, the road will literally be impassible. The answer to that prayer is that the Diocese has been able to arrange for us to fly back to Juba by the MAF relief plane, which is a massive relief. The only sad bit is that I will not be able to visit Rokon, which is our link Diocese at BFPC, although I can still get a gift to them from Juba.

We also stopped on the journey to visit the mother of Paul Issa, who is principal of the college we are now teaching at. Visiting such a hospital is heart breaking and is something hard to describe. Dark wards of people, usually waiting for death, surrounded by helpless families. Paul's mother, Josephine has had a stomach operation which has turned septic and we fear that there is not much hope. We prayed, it was all we could do.

We finally made it to Mundri and the guest house, which is very comfortable and probably something of the best this poor nation can offer. The manager, Alex, cannot do enough to help and insisted on taking me on his motorbike over to the college today - it is an exhilarating experience to fly along the tracks, clinging on, whilst being asked whether my daughter can choose her husband or whether I will choose for her. I must admit, it is something to think about... O, and we have had some vultures living in our back garden, leading to us nicknaming them Holtam, Kings and Condry, which, by an amazing coincidence, are the same names as the Bishops in Salisbury Diocese.

We have had some difficulties in communications, in that our phones have logged on to Sudanese networks which have refused to let me send any texts. I can receive them and can make and receive calls but am unable to send texts, which is frustrating. However, a local aid group, AAH, have very kindly let Jim and I use their broadband wi-fi, which means an evening Skype to the family is possible - and very much appreciated. The guest house only has electricity from 7pm to 11pm which means limited charging times for iPad etc and there are no fans overnight, which with the temperature in the 90s in the day and 70s at night is a challenge.

We have now done two days at the college and it is a truly wonderful but sapping time. We have 12 students, half of which already lead churches; the other 6 are involved in church leadership. Jim, my colleague, has subjects such as OT and NT, Preaching and Christology, whilst I have Pastoral Care, Worship and Evangelism. As someone who is a conceptual thinker, I have to work hard to teach these things to people who process information in a very different manner and, for all of them, English is far from their first language. But they are generous and attentive and the exciting thing is that Jim and I have been able to plan a way to apply what we are teaching into practical ways. We have proposed going to into two schools over the next couple of weeks and then doing the service in the cathedral on the last Sunday we are here. The principal is very enthusiastic about the idea.

So please pray ...

Thanks for safety in travel and the flight to Juba

Thanks for the good start to teaching

Thanks for the good surroundings of our Guest House

For continued health and safety

For the opportunity to develop the teaching programme

For building good relationships with all we meet.

It is good to know you are there and praying for us. Thank you!

Tim Storey