

Sudan Prayer Letter 3

Hi everyone from Mundri,

It has been a good few days but not without its difficulties. We are getting used to life in the Sudan and the teaching has gone well (more in a mo) and the experiences of the past few days have been immense in helping our understanding of the new nation of South Sudan, the Episcopal Church of the Sudan (ECS) and the cultural differences.

In terms of teaching, I have realised that my style of teaching is more conceptual than Jim's and it has been hard work for both the students and me to adjust to the learning ways which need to happen. But they have been brilliant and I was touched at the end of a lecture on Pastoral Care and the issue of Listening, that they made a point of telling me how important what I had told them was and how much they appreciated it. I also needed to be told after a couple of days that I needed to slow down my speaking - a mixture of nerves and excitement at what I was doing, I expect!

I received a call on Friday from Bishop Bismarck to say that there were some memorial prayers for someone and he would like me to be there. When someone dies, the funeral takes place as soon as possible and then some memorial prayers take place a few days later. It was quite an occasion, lasting 3 hours (and it amused me that at the 2 hour mark, the leader announced that we were coming to the end) and then there was another hour of refreshments afterwards. As the only *kawaja*, white man, present, I found myself the honoured guest, even though the bishop was there and the district commissioner and had to stay awake (not easy under a tree in 90 degrees) as I was regularly spoken to directly. The service was in the local language, Muro, and translated into Arabic with a lovely bloke called Isaac sat next to me translating for me.

Saturday was a quiet day and perhaps the most difficult day of the trip as we both felt a touch homesick with the realisation that we were only a third of the way through what is a long trip. But we have a very wonderful gift in the form of AAH, a health charity who have let us use their wi-fi whenever we want it, which means I can Skype Claire and the family on a daily basis. It makes an enormous difference but I realise it is something which a couple of years ago would have been impossible.

On Sunday, I was invited to preach at the Cathedral and spoke through a translator, a new experience for me. I had been told to keep it to 15 minutes and being the obedient soul that I am, duly did so. There was much laughter at the end, which I have been told by two people was an appreciation for being so short! It was received very well and I am very relieved to receive the encouraging comments. But it was incredibly hot and humid...

We were travelling out to see some Americans who are on a project in Mundri, to hear that the principal of the college, Paul Issa, had lost his mother. We visited her on our way here and she went into a coma at the end of the week. Our day at the college today was cancelled and we have spent the morning with the family in a moving local custom. The body arrived back at Paul's home, a few hundred yards from the college, at 10am last night and it appears they had been working all night. When we arrived at 9am, there was a tarpaulin covering a makeshift shelter over the body, which was laid out on a bed under a mosquito net in the middle of their compound. Hundreds were already there and the women sang, danced and wailed around the body as people brought messages of condolence. This is very hard for Jim to handle as he lost his mother a couple of months ago and it brings it all back, so I am taking the lead. I spoke briefly on 1 Cor 15 and the hope of eternal life. We then sat with all the men for an hour or two, being brought tea, again as honoured guests. The college will return to lectures tomorrow but I guess we will lose Friday afternoon for the memorial prayers for Josephine. Apparently they happen 4 days later or 3 if it is a man (no

idea why!)

We are now nearly half way through our time here and we are already beginning to think that there will be pressure to finish what we are doing, especially after today. We are so grateful to be able to speak to our families and it makes a big difference. It gets dark at 7pm on the dot and then the lights come on so we can read a while (the generator has enough fuel for 3 to 4 hours a day and so the lights and fans go off at 10pm). Once the generator goes off it gets hot in the room and my foam mattress has had someone sleeping in a particular position to the degree that I must find that position in order to get comfortable. As the bed is spot on 6 feet long, I end up sleeping diagonally in order not to get caught up in my mosquito net. At about 5am, things begin to stir and the cooking begins, and at 6.30 the busyness is even louder. At 7am on the dot it gets light and Lenin the cockerel sets off earlier than that at about 2 minute intervals. We are eating chicken every day and we are hoping one day it will include cockerel.

So, for prayer... Please pray...

That we will be able to do all the teaching work we have come to do.

For Jim as he has to face some difficult emotions in the days to come.

That we will not be homesick but will be able to focus on what we are doing and what God is saying to us here.

That we will continue to enjoy good health!

For Paul and his family in their loss of Josephine.

For the students: Mary, Jacob, Repent, Emmanuel, Miriama, Nathan, William, James, Moses, John, Charles and Santelle, that they would be open to receive all that God is teaching them.

For safety in travel - the roads here are challenging!

Give thanks for all that God is doing and pray that he will do more!

With much love (and dreams of crunchy nut cornflakes and cold milk!)

Tim Storey