

## Sudan Prayer Letter 4

Hi everyone

The end of the middle week of our time here. We thought this would be a week that would be hard to handle but it has been better, rather than easier, than we thought. I expected to be homesick and struggle with the thought of still so much time to go, along with the work being harder to keep going. But it has been different to that. I am really looking forward to going home but the work has been interesting and stimulating in such a way that the days have flown by and so homesickness has probably not been able to take hold. This week we have had the death of Paul's mother, a school assembly and the start of the preaching practice and all these things have been high learning opportunities. I did two lessons of Pastoral Care on Friday and got them to think about significant events in their lives, the idea of a time line and how it shapes us as people, and the sort of events in people's lives when they need Pastoral Care. They really got it (Charles was particularly encouraging) and it made the lesson really interesting. They spoke more about the war traumas and displacement and I found it really interesting to look at the issues they face from where they are. And also to be able to offer the idea of WWJD as a completely novel concept! So at the end of the week, it is great to know that this time next week, we will have finished teaching and beginning the process of leaving, but that there is much still to teach and learn. I can't wait in many ways to go home, for a nice bath, a bowl of cornflakes and something other than rice, greens and beans, but I can live with the wait!

Some things are the same wherever you are in the world. There was a funeral party at the Bridge Hotel which lasted very noisily until 4am (at least) and kept us awake, even though it is a good mile or so away. It can be quite noisy anyway, with Lenin the Cockerel having absolutely no sense of time, the sounds of the tropical night and the incessant laughter of the cooks outside my window. Add to that the call to prayer for the Muslim celebrations of Eid at the Mundri Mosque, which is a couple of hundred yards from here, and you get the picture. Mundri is a complex mix of tribes and it appears that there is no great tension between Christian and Muslim, despite the pain between north and south as nations. When we are walking, our greeting is a random shot in one of three languages: "mede" (in Moru, the local language), "salaam" (Arabic) or simply "hello". What comes back could be any one of the three languages or something from the innumerable tribal languages round here. From the kids it is a "how are you" or "hello", usually at a high volume. Alternatively, the Moru greeting is "Mikado?", which is a "how are you?" greeting, to which the response is "Makado!", which is along the lines of "I'm ok!". And then there is the compulsory shaking of hands, or touching of wrists if someone feels their hands are dirty. Hugs are very minimal and from a distance usually. It was a real sign of acceptance when we were walking back from college with William, one of the students and he held my hand as we walked - a real sign of friendship.

We went to Baya Primary School on Thursday morning, to do an assembly. Although a primary school, there were pupils well into their teens. We arrived to a chorus (sung) from the children "The white man from church has come" and then waited as they formed up. We went to see the Head Teacher, Emmanuel, and his office was somewhat different to the ones in Blandford! The teachers have sticks to guide the pupils, occasionally using them to more than just guide them. There are 892 pupils, down from the 916 which started the year. The fees are £SS 100 a year - which is a lot, but they want to encourage people to pay in order to understand the priority of education. It was a good thing we didn't try to buy a notebook for every pupil, as we had originally planned ... One reason for the visit was to enable the students to see the application of what we have been doing with them. We involved them in a drama of the Prodigal Son, which they really loved doing and did so with great gusto. The performance of Repent, as a scary pig, and James, whose "dying fatted calf" performance was worthy of an Oscar nomination, were particularly noteworthy.

So we enter the final full week of our time here. This time next week we shall have finished teaching and will be preparing for our journey home. So please pray that we achieve all we need to in the time available, as well as...

- Giving thanks for good health throughout our time so far.
- Giving thanks for the real sense of progress with the students.
- Giving thanks for the opportunities we have been able to take.
- Praying for the students to benefit from this very different approach to learning we offer.
- Praying for the Principal, Paul, who continues to mourn his mother, particularly praying for him on Monday, when the community comes together for memorial prayers.
- Praying for physical, mental and spiritual resources for Jim and myself. We are feeling tired as a result of the cumulative effects of the work, the heat and the physical demands of the diet and lifestyle.

Thanks for reading these epistles... Please feel free to reply if you like! And thanks, too, for your prayers as we feel very much a part of them.

With love in Jesus

Tim

Rev Dr YabaKawaja (BNTC hons and bar)