

Sudan Prayer Letter 5

Dear all

Well here we are - the month is nearly gone and we will be home at the end of next week after what has been a very tiring but exhilarating, challenging, encouraging, exciting and interesting month. The past week or so has gone by in a flash as the momentum of teaching has gained pace and it is amazing that we have now finished our park at the college. The 12 students have grown in confidence despite the incredible effort it takes for them to learn in English, which for some of them is their third or fourth language. We have just completed a set of preaching classes which have been an ordeal for some - not because of their theology or their desire to preach the gospel, but because they have to verbalise what God is saying to them in words which are virtually alien to them. I have grown to love them deeply because they have a passion to serve and preach and they are so much fun to be with.

We have one two assemblies with them and the way they entered into the drama with such gusto and did the action songs was great. We went to the second one, at a senior school on Thursday. This does not mean over 11s, this means one who has finished primary education so could mean someone in their late teens or even early 20s. We did the drama of the Good Samaritan including some very enthusiastic and manic thieves and a vocal donkey who gave the victim a piggy back. The context of being helped by someone from a tribe that hates yours worked well and they laughed and listened appropriately and got the message. Opposite the school was the shell of the old primary school, completely ransacked by northern troops in the war. Afterwards, Jim and I joined in some impromptu volleyball with the students, showing more enthusiasm than finesse. The journey to and from the school was special and was almost a snapshot of our time here, with a dreadful vehicle that sounded as though it would fall apart at any moment, crammed with people, singing songs such as "Jesus #1" as we passed every kind of life including children, goats, market, the prison, bikes, buda-buda bike taxis, lorries and houses. Just brilliant!

Monday was the day of the funeral prayers for the mother of the Principal, Paul. We went up to Paul's house at 1200 and waited for an hour for the service to begin, having to endure the most awful music. A keyboard with a drum machine, playing the same rhythm for all the songs, all played at maximum volume and some "interesting" singing as well. It was like sitting through a 1980s school Depeche Mode tribute band. The service lasted four hours, with a sermon lasting over an hour and tributes from everyone and their vulture. Then there was communion and greetings from both Bp Bismarck and Bp Stephen, who is bishop of Lui. This meant that Jim and I each had a personal episcopal translator (just realised we each had PETs). The food afterwards included the gooey green stuff that reminds me of bogeys and probably tastes similar. So we finally got away at 1800. Definitely enough for one day.

So now we are trying to extract ourselves - which is not as easy as it sounds. We have been told we are now part of the College family and part of the local community. It takes us a long time to get anywhere partially because we have now adopted the speed of the average Sudanese, which is marginally above "snail" but will mean my dog will get frustrated when I get home cos it is not fast enough for her, and partially because everyone wants to greet us as we go by and the children shout "hello" and "how are you?" and want to shake our hands. On Monday we shall have a leaving service, which Jim is leading and I am preaching at and, we believe, the community will be represented with various leaders present. On Sunday, we are both preaching at the Cathedral, me at the English service and Jim at the Moru service.

There is a Mission going on outside the Cathedral all week and Jim spoke on Tuesday about repentance. I am speaking on Sunday evening and (as a result of Jim's experience) now know I have to speak for up to two hours (at this moment, I can see many of you rolling your eyes with horror at the thought). I am able to intersperse the time with a testimony, songs

and drama (the Good Samaritan will definitely make an appearance) but they will get a substantial amount of sermon time. So, beware Blandford, when I come back, I might get a taste for it!

There is much to pray for...

- Thanks for good health throughout the trip, and safety in travel. Please pray that the remainder will continue to be so.
- For the students, that God will bless their ministries to come and that what we have given them will equip them for the future. And pray to for the Principal, Paul, as he takes the students on from here especially as he continues to grieve the loss of his mother.
- Thanks for so many special and meaningful times over the past month. Please pray that God will use these to equip both Jim and I for future ministry through them.
- For the trawl in the coming days that all will go well and we will get all our connections.
- Thanks for the opportunities we have been given and the resources to make the most of them.
- And, especially, for God's resources and energy with the days ahead, thinking about the preaching demands over Sunday and Monday.

Please continue to pray for our families and especially that we can readjust to UK living. It will not be easy for them or us and we are conscious that we shall arrive back in a bit if a heap!

Thank you to everyone who has emailed - it has been great to hear from you. God has been by good to us throughout this trip and given us many people to support us and help us, both at home and here in South Sudan and it has made all the difference in enabling us to persevere over the past month. Thank you!

With love from a hot and thundery Mundri,

Tim