



“If it was easy, anyone could do it”

The above phrase is one we occasionally say to one another, tongue in cheek, in light of the many challenges of working in the newest nation in the world. Let’s recount some things.....We work in a country which has less than 100 miles of paved roads. We work in a state capital less than 100 miles from the national capital; a trip that by road, under the best of conditions, takes 4 ½ hours. It can take 4-5 days in the rainy season. Literacy is just 27%. The people of South Sudan have been at war in one form or another 80% of the time since securing independence from Britain in 1956. Neither of us had been to Africa, let alone South Sudan, 54 months ago. We decided to build a Christian vocational boarding school. At the time, Chuck estimated construction costs were about 4 times what they were in the U.S., mainly because nearly everything is imported and transported on terrible roads. Estimates are that at least 60% of the cost of everything at the retail level is due to transportation. We employed a brother from Ghana with school experience to be principal and moved him from west Africa to east Africa. That didn’t work out. We recognized in Jacob Agany, a South Sudanese, the potential to head up the school. His assignment was much more complicated than stepping into the leadership of an existing school that had a curriculum, furniture, a staff, and a student body. Other than a dream on our part and a campus under construction he started somewhere before zero. Some would have questioned our sanity. Jacob was 27 years old and just a high school graduate. He had no vocational training himself. Just one of a number of great decisions God led us to make. Construction of the campus was finished in October 2013. Plans were made to open in February 2014. In December 2013 what the South

Sudanese call “the crisis” which lasted over 1 ½ years interrupted our plans. Well over 10,000 died and many more were displaced, a lot of them in refugee camps in neighboring countries. Many of our new brethren scattered. Some have never been heard from. During the first month of the crisis, rebels and government soldiers exchanged control of Bor, the town where we worked, four times. Each time destruction increased. Our campus was occupied. The people of Bor fled to the bush, Jacob and his family among them. We did not know if we had a campus left. In February 2014, as the crisis continued, we went to South Sudan specifically to see what was left. The only way to get to Bor was by charter plane; which agreed to stay on the ground only three hours. It was a tense trip. We heard automatic gunfire while standing on our campus. While the Lutheran Food Program facility next door to our campus had been burned to the ground, damage to our campus was minimal. About \$16,000 made necessary repairs. When the crisis ended people began returning to Bor. Opening of the school had been delayed one year. Teachers had to be recruited from neighboring Kenya and Uganda partially because so few in South Sudan had skills. When the school opened in February 2015 many potential students had been scattered. Those to whom we had access had little ability to pay their minimal tuition we had planned to charge; not to make the school self-supporting but so students had an investment in their learning. Twenty graduated the first term. Forty one graduated the next term. We decided to increase tuition and 33 graduated the 3rd term which ended July 1st. We were present for graduation. This July, seventy two hours after Chuck left for home fighting again broke out in Juba. Dennis was in Bor which was unaffected but there was fear the problems would spread as it had 2 ½ years earlier. That didn’t happen. Hundreds were killed in Juba. The

American Embassy said Americans should evacuate South Sudan. The airports were closed and roads were unsafe. The U.N. ordered us to “shelter in place. Dennis’ return trip was complicated. Upon hearing all of this, someone has to ask “Can you conduct an effective program under such conditions?” God said “yes”. Chuck & Dennis said “yes”. South Sudanese Christians said “yes”. Sounds like you have the answer! There are now four congregations in Jonglei State. Let us brag on one. They lost several members to the crisis. On an average Sunday less than 35 male members (plus female members, adult visitors, and children) attend. On their wall is a roster of the men who lead singing, teach the Bible class, and preach. Six men are song leaders. Thirteen men teach Bible classes. Fifteen men take turns preaching. Fourteen men take turns being in charge of the Lord’s Supper and giving. This is something given more preparation and attention than is common in America. These men have been Christians from 4 months to 4 years. The vocational school is helping people help themselves and creating good will with government officials and the community. The Bible correspondence program has taught hundreds the truth through its courses. Not all have obeyed but some have and others will defend what they have been taught as the truth when discussing the Bible with fellow members of their denominations. Some of those will eventually obey.

A.S.A.P.

Every missionary involved in 3rd world countries where poverty is a factor is faced with how they should respond. Where to start? Where to stop? We have chosen to do most of our humanitarian work by helping children go to school and helping schools. We pay school fees for 35 children. That number will grow. We have provided

pencils and pens without which students were not going to be able to take national exams.



Pictured, above, is a water well drilled at New Sudan Primary School, for the school and the community.



Above is a pit dug for a latrine which has since been built at the school which has 485 students, 15 teachers, and had not one restroom. Because of the good will created, members now teach a weekly Bible class to the combined 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Donations earmarked A.S.A.P.. (A School Aid Program) will let us continue to help kids and schools.



JCVBS Graduation

Twenty four men and 9 women graduated July 1st. Government officials in attendance praised the school and pledged their support. After a two week break, the fourth term is now in progress with 40 enrolled. This is a boarding school. Staff members include teachers from Kenya and Uganda. Jonglie Christian Vocational Boarding School has a bright future. Salaries and food expenses are the

biggest budget items. This is only possible because of donations.



Church Building Under Construction

One congregation meets on the vocational school campus which is at the edge of Bor, too far for most residents to attend. They would have to walk far and some do. The congregation which was described above because of its great level of involvement meets in the literature center in Marol Market. Fortunately we now own our own facility for that—funds for the purchase and renovation having been donated by one family. Unfortunately even in South Sudan there is the perception that a church must have a church building. This is not a New Testament idea but one inherited from denominationalism, Catholicism, and American brethren. Nevertheless perception is reality so construction of a concrete block building 46 feet x 72 feet is underway. It is in a residential area, close to the center of the city. Completion is scheduled by November. This will take the church in Bor to the next level. We have dipped into other funds, needed to operate the vocational school, so construction can be underway before things are shut down by the rainy season; thus being delayed a year. Projected cost for the lot, a perimeter fence, the building, and furnishings is \$56,000. This is the most pressing financial need at the moment. Members already have pride in what will be there. The ruins of a house destroyed during the crisis in December 2013, a latrine, a sheet iron fence, and two trees have been removed by members on four work days. They don't have money to put into the building but they have sweat and have used it. We anticipate being able to worship in this building during our next trip.



Meet Sister Aluel

In January 2012, Jacob Ajak's village was raided by an enemy tribe. Hundreds of cattle were stolen. Eighty four people were killed; among them Ajak's mother and maternal grandmother. At 17 he became the guardian of three younger brothers, ages 4, 8 and 11 at the time, and responsible for his paternal grandmother. In the months that followed he obeyed the gospel and, now at 21, is a church leader. Two of his brothers have obeyed the gospel. In June his grandmother said she needed to be baptized, but she didn't want to go to the river; perhaps because crocodiles are in the Nile. We explained to her that the only way to be baptized the Bible way was by immersion; that there was not a single person in the Bible baptized by sprinkling as the Episcopal Church, with which she was most familiar, does. Usually we would ask someone with whom we are having such a conversation to read some scriptures for herself but she, like most women her age has never read. She is illiterate. We explained there is a baptistery at the vocational school campus and the next morning she was baptized there. I asked Ajak "What would she answer if I asked her how old she is?" "She would say I don't know. Maybe her brother knows." No one has ever recognized her birthday. Now she has a NEW BIRTH day.

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