

The Sudan Project is a mission outreach of the Mt. Juliet Church of Christ in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee.



THE SUDAN PROJECT

Churches of Christ at work in Sudan

Sudan Exploratory Trip Proves Productive

An intensive 15-day trip to visit the work in South Sudan was recently made by Don Humphrey and DeWayne "Grif" Griffin from the overseeing Mount Juliet, Tennessee congregation. This was the first time in a long while that it has been considered peaceful enough for outsiders to travel into South Sudan.

The men flew first into Ethiopia, the African country bordering Sudan on the southeast. There they were joined by John Ed Clark, an elder from the Woodward Park Church of Christ in Fresno, CA, Joseph Smith of Healing Hands International, Nashville, and two of the leading preachers from South Sudan, Isaya Jackson and Kennedy Shurama.

The six men initially carried out a detailed study of the very successful preaching school, drip irrigation, kindergartens, and well provision work that has been accomplished in Ethiopia. An adapted but similar plan will be used for the preaching school soon to begin in Magwi, South Sudan.

From Ethiopia, the men flew into Juba, the capital of South Sudan. Their first two nights had to be spent in a \$155-a-night Chinese hotel (the cheapest hotel in town) as their necessary tents and food did not arrive on the flight with them. This "fancy" hotel lacked electricity some of the time, and Grif's room had a huge hole in the floor.

Soon after the men left, the hotel burned to the ground. Luckily, their necessary luggage did arrive the next day, however; and the bumpy four-hour trip to Magwi was begun.

The five short articles below will help you to understand the progress being made in these varying aspects of the Sudanese work.

The Compound

While in Magwi, the physical property that has already been purchased for the church and school compound was carefully examined. The location is excellent — right on one of the main roads into and out of town. For once we have a better location than the Catholics, as their building is behind our land!

The men also checked to make sure the property is titled in the name of "Church of Christ." Isaya will take a copy of the title to an attorney in Juba to make sure that it is a good title.

This legal opinion is needed to make sure the foreign title is in good shape and that the land is truly ours before money is spent building on it.



"We drove as far as we could and then got out and walked the rest of the way."

One of the unique problems that would not be encountered here in America is that about 12-15 squatters have taken up residence on the church property. Citizens of South Sudan generally do not own their land but simply erect a grass hut wherever they like. However, a village official assured us that this would not be a problem and that he would be sure the squatters moved when construction began.

We learned that one of the first things we should do is construct a fence around the property. Cost estimates are currently being received.

A master plan for the campus showing size and placement of the other buildings is also in process. A drawing should be available soon.

Local Churches

While there, the men were able to list 14 congregations of the Lord's church in South Sudan and six in Uganda of the Acholi tribe. One other congregation is being started in another tribe.

Six of these churches were visited on the trip. These are newly established congregations made up of returning Christian war refugees. Also visited was the Opari village where a congregation is now being organized.



"Preachers love overflow crowds and in Sudan, if you run out of chairs inside, it is no problem!"

In each of the locations visited, the reception was excellent. Crowds exceeded by far the capacity of the structures.

Numerous people sat on the ground or stood in the sun for hours. The rest sat on log poles (without backs) for the entire service and paid excellent attention. A large number of those attending were not members.

One noticeable characteristic of the crowds was the attendance of a large number of children. This tells us that a very open door exists to teach the Sudanese children as large numbers swarm to any teaching occasion.



"These children love the front rows."



"The roads were never good. Our vehicle is stuck!"



"What a Bible school potential at the Maji church."

Local Churches continued

All of the men on the trip were deeply impressed with the Sudanese people's eager reception to the preaching of the Gospel. Apparently the crowds were just from word of mouth advertising. Many other nearby villagers would also have attended if an effort was made to invite them.

A startling fact stands out about these churches, however. In conversation with Isaya Jackson, he stressed that of all of these churches, only two can be considered mature. He explained that their immaturity is only because they are currently not being taught.

This immediately impressed several things on our minds. (1) First is that the need for speedy establishment of the planned preaching school is urgent so that preachers can be prepared and sent to these new congregations.

(2) Also very obvious is that these people are eager and able to be taught. They swarm to services any time there is preaching! (3) It is obvious that many other congregations could be established if there were enough preachers.

(4) Where sufficient leaders exist in the mature congregations, even now some of those men need to be urged to go and teach in the immature churches. These churches are in the same condition as if one of your six-month old children or grandchildren was told it that it was on its own now — and then left totally alone to fend for itself. Its survival would be in grave danger!



"This is the Ethiopian version of what the Magwi kindergarten will be like."

The Kindergarten

Part of the evangelism plan from the beginning has been to also establish a kindergarten. Several reasons made this a wise idea. First, it is necessary to satisfy the town that we are doing something for the community in order to be given property on which to build our church building and preacher's school. Second, a kindergarten will give us a speedy and positive introduction into many village homes. It is planned that the children in this school be selected by the local town officials from poorer families and that the education be offered to them free.

Water Wells

Joseph Smith of Healing Hands International traveled with the men on the complete trip, and he was able to firsthand examine pumps that were inoperative. Some of these wells were not working because of the need of a simple repair. Others needed to be drilled deeper.



"Can you imagine how long it takes with only one pump to fill these water cans?"

At the site of many working pumps, the demand for water was so great that it required a wait of several hours for a turn to pump water. Healing Hands will be making their own plans concerning getting their equipment and crew into Sudan and proceeding with this work. Their work will be an invaluable asset in opening doors for the Gospel.

The Fields are White

A great deal of ground was covered on this trip. The important information gathered is now sufficient to make some important decisions and get started on our ultimate goal of carrying the Gospel to "the lost souls" of Sudan.



"If there is no available stream for baptisms, you dig a hole in the ground, line it with tarps and fill it with water from the closest pump!"



"A former Seventh Day Adventist going down into a South Sudan baptistry."

This trip deeply impressed all those involved with the seriousness and urgency of our efforts in South Sudan. For the first time, the men truly saw the graphic picture recorded in Matthew 9:36-38.

"When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.'"

This is an open door if there ever was one! But that door will not stay open forever. Thank you each for your continuing support, and please pray fervently for the wisdom of those "on the battle field" in this important work for the Lord.