



UNDER TREE SCHOOLS

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Dear Friends

It's great to be in touch with you and to give you an update on life in Sudan!



Cattle peacefully grazing, no more cattle raids

The peace has been generally holding in the South since the Peace Agreement 2 ½ years ago, although there are still many issues to be resolved between the North and the South. For instance, the withdrawal of the Northern troops from the South or how to manage the oil causes debate, and the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) still creates unrest on both sides of the borders. We continue to pray for wisdom and goodwill! We also continue to pray for the situation in Darfur, tough negotiations are needed to relieve the hardship of so many displaced people.

Joseph's work as Director of Religious Affairs has been going well despite the challenges that can be expected! The main task is focusing on reconciliation between different groups, factions, tribes and religions. We are grateful for our connections to help put Sudan on the international agenda, as the conflict there can't be seen and solved in isolation.

Many people are returning either from exile or from having been displaced within Sudan and are rebuilding their lives. It is a very long way to go, as after 4 decades of war the infrastructure has to be rebuilt from scratch. Joseph has had many wonderful reunions with friends we made from our times working in the camps in Uganda. It is hard to conceive what many have gone through, and they are such examples of God's sustaining grace.

We have been focusing on the area in Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal which during the war was very difficult to get to, and also now is not easy to reach. The one road leading there is slowly being worked on, but during the rain season heavier vehicles can't pass.

Many NGO's work in Juba or along the borders of Uganda / Kenya as the infrastructure offers for expatriates a little bit more. Very few go further into the country.

our trucks were stuck for a week,
note the washing...



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After the years of improvising during the war, we are so grateful that we have been able to start building a permanent school in Malek. We see the development of this school into having a base in the area to offer teaching in a wider sense in the future, to equip especially girls' with life skills, health education and vocational skills. The school will also be used for Adult Education, TEE courses (theological education by extension) and the chapel will also be used by the local community.



Commissioner Wol (middle) helps gathering stones

The local community has gifted a very large area of land on the outskirts of Malek to UTS for the new school. The local leaders of the community are fully behind the project and are part of an advisory group supporting the planning. Malek is a growing town as people return from exile to their home areas now that the war is over. The area is peaceful, and agriculture is resuming.

We have registered 700 girls and boys for the new school. Many have never had any schooling because of the war, although they range in

age from 7 up to mid-teenage. They are being taught under the trees this year while the school buildings are erected. From next year we will select 300 to move into the new school when it is ready. If enough can be encouraged to apply, all the pupils will be girls. The state system will take the other children, and Joseph is in close contact with the state authorities to encourage them to set up their schools. We have taken on 7 teachers and plan more, including some women teachers. We will employ an experienced head teacher and hope to bring in experienced expatriates to do teacher training.



Teachers' accommodation being built



The building costs are very high because of the amount of building going on in Southern Sudan and due to the lack of regular easy transport yet. The buildings need to be of high quality and traditional design to give them a long life. We have employed experienced builders and progress in building is rapid. In the next weeks the sleeping and living huts for the teachers and eight classrooms will be roofed.

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Joseph has and community process. They collect stones on for breaking up needed for making breaking of stones



With your help this possible! The and the trustees of Schools” in express their praise God for all possible in a short grateful to those who have so generously supported our work over the last year!

brought the children into the building enthusiastically Saturdays. This is into the aggregate concrete (the is done by adults!).

has become community in Malek “Under Tree England want to thanks to you. We that has been made time and are very

We are also thankful to some of our former students to join the school in Malek.

The funds raised so far are now used up in getting to this stage. The next work, in the autumn, will be to drill water boreholes, fit out the classrooms and build a teachers' staff room, a head teacher's office, and storerooms. The cost of this is estimated at £65'000. After that the school will be completed with more classrooms, a chapel, a library, sports facilities and a clinic. The whole school could be complete by early 2008 if we could fund this work by raising £95'000 by November, and a last £55'000 in the new year!

To run the school will cost £30,000 a year to pay teachers and other staff, buy and transport teaching materials and other necessities.

These high amounts have to be put into the context of the inflation and building boom. If you want to rent a room for a month in Juba, it costs you \$ 1000! Or for a decent meal out you would pay \$ 50!

Some key items we need to fund are:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Library (building and furnishing) | £25,000 |
| Books for the library | £7,500 |
| Two water boreholes | £6,000 each |
| Clinic building | £15,000 |
| Equipping of clinic | £7,500 |
| Running track | £ 500 |
| 4 Basketball Courts | £500 each |
| Teacher - salary for a year | £1,500 |
| Nurse - salary for a year | £1,200 |
| Sports equipment for a year | £1,000 |
| Bicycles for 14 teaching and admin staff | £75 each |
| Uniform for a student | £30 |

The trustees appreciate that these are substantial amounts of money to raise, and are considering whom to approach for help.

We are very grateful to you for all you have been able to do. At the meeting we held with supporters on 30th June, we were able to discuss the issue of how we could best proceed now.

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One thing we would really welcome is for churches and organisations to adopt "Under Tree Schools" as a mission project. Are you in a position to approach a group and suggest this to them? You will have a lot of experience of how things work in your own area. We would be very happy to visit and make a presentation to groups who might be interested, and to provide material and information in support of them. We are presently working on a DVD which we are happy to send out to you. Please let Karin know.

For example speaking to local schools we have found the children enthusiastic to learn more about their counterparts in Africa. Perhaps local schools near you realize how their pupils would benefit from an ongoing relationship with lively children in a school and a town which are starting to recover from very difficult times. Perhaps those schools would love you to offer them a link with "Under Tree Schools" if they knew you were a supporter?

We have created gift certificates which can be sent to people as presents. If you (or others) would like to make a donation we can send a certificate in response to the donation. It reads: "This gift is a donation to the "Under Tree Schools" charity, educating girls in Southern Sudan. It will be used to help set up a new school for pupils aged 7-15 by paying for ... [whatever you want]. It's A5 size, includes a picture of teaching under the trees and carries the signature of a trustee. It can be viewed on the website.

Gift-aiding your donations has made your support go further. If you are a UK tax payer, (and pay enough tax to cover the gift-aid refund), it can be printed off from our website: www.stmarybarnes.org, click on the tree in the top corner to get to the UTS pages.

We add new updates about Southern Sudan every month, so it's a way to keep in touch between newsletters!

Also, please let us know if you prefer to receive this letter by email.

We want to emphasise the bigger picture. While we do need funds to finish the school this is not the be all and end all of our vision for the "Under Tree Schools". We want to be a bridge between two very different parts of the world enabling both sides to learn from each other, and to see what God is doing in different contexts, yet faced with some similar issues. For this part of the world, there is so much that we can learn from people in Sudan. How does God sustain people in the face of persecution and suffering? How do you stand firm in Christ when you are offered to swap your religion for a better life? The cynic may say that when you are stripped of much of the basics that makeup life, religion is a welcome crutch. But those who have been there, experience in every way that God is life, and gives life in abundance which nothing else can in the same way. Out of this flows hope and love that the world cannot take away.

Once again, on behalf of the community in Malek and the trustees a big thank you for your support in so many ways.

Every blessing

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