

South Sudan/Uganda update
October 2, 2011

From Rose Schwartz, reporting on church, the medical clinic, and the Operation Joseph Farm---

It's Sunday, the day when most people go to church. Here in Yei we woke up at the crack of dawn. That's when the roosters start crowing in town and on the mission base where we are staying. It was a beautiful morning with warm sunshine and a gentle breeze. We took our time with breakfast, which was rice, hard-boiled eggs, bread and baby bananas. This is a great time to connect as a team and start our day together.

Soon after breakfast we went to church, which is on the same property as the building we are staying in. Worship was already happening as we walked into the church building. We were escorted to seats in the front row. It was wonderful to walk in on worship that was alive and moving. Even though the worship team was singing in their native language, it was certainly not a barrier in being able to worship. God showed up and was in the midst of it all. It was great to be able to worship on the other side of the world with God's children who live in a totally different way than we do. Life is very different here but yet our hearts are united in Christ.

After worship it was testimony time. Wow, the testimonies of physical healing were amazing. Two cell group leaders shared of how God is healing adults and children in their groups. The faith of the Sudanese is challenging to me.

Clint was then introduced to the church by Pastor Stanley. Each team member was also introduced by Clint and shared in thanking the people of Sudan for welcoming us to their country, sharing what God is doing hearts while we are here, and sharing how much we love the people of Sudan. Once the team was introduced to the church, Carrie, Kathy and Joe went to the children's church to teach and sing songs with the children. The rest of us stayed for the message time that Clint presented to the church family. Can I just say that Clint comes alive while preaching in Africa? For those of you who have listened to him preach at The Vineyard would be shocked to hear him here. The passion flows from him. Today's message was based on Psalms 37, speaking of how God has his hand on the country of South Sudan and has had His hand in the fact that South Sudan is now a free country. It was an encouragement and a challenge to the church to not lose sight of what God is doing in their now free country. Good stuff!

After a delicious lunch of pasta with ground goat meat, bread and fruit, it was time to go to Pastor Ellie's church, 4-Mile Church, for a medical outreach. We all got into the back of the dump truck and rode on the smooth roads to the church. Riding on smooth roads in this area is unusual so we were pleasantly surprised. We dropped off Kathy, Michelle, Joe, Marc and Carrie then Clint, Steve and I took off for Operation Joseph farm.

The medical clinic went well with helping 108+ individuals. When we dropped the team off at the church we didn't think anyone was there. Later on we found out that the church building was full of people when they walked in. Adults and children were treated for fevers of malaria, pinworms, upper respiratory infections, and more. There were also situations that could not be treated because of lack of medication or more advanced medical care such as a doctor office or hospital. This was difficult to see and needing to turn them away was heartbreaking. As people were being treated they were also being prayed for before they left. What a blessing to be prayed for on top of being treated with medication of

some sort. Even as Carrie was speaking with and diagnosing all these individuals, it is God who is our healer in the big picture. How grateful we are for this reality! Something really great is that Joe, with the help of our friend Kuku, has been learning quite a bit of Arabic to be able to communicate better with the Sudanese people. He was able to communicate very well with many of the people as he was helping them during the clinic. What a blessing for Joe to be able to pick up the language so quickly. God is good!

As the people were being treated physically, Clint, Steve and I went to the farm. What an unforgettable experience! It had started raining on our way and quickly became a hard rain. This was not good for our 8 or so mile drive through the roads of the biggest potholes I've ever seen. The ravines were created by the weather and rain. With the rain adding to the rough drive, it certainly didn't help with the fact that the rear tires on the dump truck are completely bald! The tires were slipping quite a bit as we were working our way through the incredibly uneven "roads". I can honestly say that the truck was not level for at least 90% of time. By the time we got to the farm the ground was completely soaked, muddy, and slippery. The farm is doing well and we were able to take some video as the rain slowed just enough to give us time to do some video recording and photography. We're excited to give a report when we get home.

We were able to drive over the new bridge that was built earlier this year. This bridge was built with the money that was raised at last year's Art for the Heart of Africa Benefit Auction. It was a damaged bridge for over 40 years and was on the direct path to the farm. In the photo you will see the remains of the old bridge thrown into the ditch beside the road. The new bridge is to be celebrated after having to use the old barely usable bridge. Thank you Vineyard family and friends for raising the funds to be able to build this fully functional bridge.

We got into the dump truck cab to leave the farm and within a few feet of leaving we got stuck. It was disconcerting to know that either we were going to walk 8+ miles to get out of the bush or we had to figure out a way to get unstuck. The farm workers jumped right in and helped with digging and finding branches to put in front and behind the tires for traction. I was very impressed and amazed at their ability to get this huge truck out of the pit of mud created by the big bald rear tires. We got going and then later got stuck again! Clint and Steve jumped out to help getting the truck unstuck. If we would not have had the very talented driver that we had, I'm not sure that we would've made it back to the church to pick up the medical team. I'm still amazed at the talent of our driver!

What is the lesson learned from the going to the farm in the rain with bald tires on the dump truck and getting stuck twice? It is vital for there to be good tires on this dump truck (especially during the rainy season, which is soon coming to an end here). This truck is a lifeline to the Operation Joseph farm! In America we can drive on our roads with bald tires for a time and still get around well but here in South Sudan that is not the case. Good tires are very important when driving on the roads here. Our hope to be able to get new tires along with some other shopping that we will be doing for the Dreamland children tomorrow.

Tomorrow is our last day here in Yei and we all have mixed emotions as we prepare to say goodbye to the children and our adult friends. We have a very busy day planned so prayers are appreciated. Thank you so much for all your priceless prayers. God is consistently showing up and moving among us.

In Him, Rose Schwartz