

JUBA JOURNAL PART I (excerpted)

Background: For many years of my service in Tanzania, I have warmly welcomed the wonderful visits of teams of gifted specialists who join us on a “Medical Mission.” For almost as long, I have dreamed of the day when we would be able to send out a Tanzanian team of expert, Christian doctors and nurses to serve others as we have been served. A dream of a maturing Christian hospital that could participate in sharing the love and compassion of Christ with those in need and without access to good care. Now the dream has begun. On to Juba: The ELCA has begun a special relationship with the new country of South Sudan. The Lutherans were one of the welcoming denominations who, during the long years of civil strife and tribal warfare, opened their arms wide to receive a steady stream of Sudanese refugees. When finally South Sudan voted in an historic referendum for Independence, South Sudan became the newest nation on the globe. The Sudanese diaspora was almost desperate to help the new nation recover, reconcile, and develop. The ELCA has formed a new mission in Juba to assist in this reconciliation process. Referendum is an area on the outskirts of Juba which is mainly inhabited by internally displaced people and returning refugees from camps in neighboring Kenya, Uganda, or Ethiopia. It may have a couple hundred thousand living there without any government services. There is no electricity, no water, no sewer, no schools, no clinics, and the only services available at all are expensive private businesses. It is here that the Evangelical Lutheran Church Africa Mission South Sudan has been led to start a center for reconciliation. A compound with a church, classrooms, and clinic, it seeks to be a light and to provide hope to the people of Referendum. I have been blessed to be asked to help the ELCAMSS to establish this clinic and to think about the public health outreach possible from it. Now God provides an opportunity to serve in leading a team of my Tanzanian colleagues to Juba for a week of fistula surgery.

Four new missionaries to Juba. Dr. Mmbando of the ELCT National Office, Dr. Mruma, a Gynecologist trained by us over the years at Selian and now returned to work with us at home, Noela Richards, an experienced fistula scrub nurse from Selian. Then, Dr. Browning, a long time fistula surgeon from Selian will join us in Juba from Australia where he has moved his family at the end of last year

JUBA JOURNAL PART II

29 May 2018: Reconciliation

I was asked to share at morning prayers today and as our center is name Reconciliation Center we explored the meaning of 1 Cor 5:18 in the middle of South Sudan. “All this is from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ Jesus and gives to us the ministry of reconciliation.” We are called first into a new



and reconciled relationship with our Creator and in turn we are to become God's reconcilers in a broken world. The Reconciliation Community Center and Clinic is called to be a special place of reconciliation. It's staff embody reconciliation as they come from many tribal groups. We offer hope and healing to all who enter these hallowed grounds of reconciliation.

30 May 2018: Miracles

Third day of operating. The third day of miracles. When we arrived at the Centre, a rainbow was blessing the bell tower. We have operated on 8 patients the first two days and all but one are now cured and she will need another operation at the end of the week to take care of her! What an amazing room of joy we meet now as we come into our makeshift ward each morning after prayers. Pastor Matthew spoke today in morning prayers. A man with an interesting background, he was first a refugee in Cairo and later a Bible School student in Nazareth in Israel. He spoke to the miracles he was seeing in the lives of the women we serve and how his understanding had changes about miracles only being of the spiritual world but of the medical world as well.



Agong is one smiling woman this morning as we make rounds. Almost giddy with her joy at being dry after 4 years of incontinence. She suffered from a prolonged labor 4 years ago, lost the baby, and began leaking urine. Four months ago another surgeon operated on her but the operation failed and she was deeply depressed. But today, she is nothing but smiles. Here she is with our nurse Noela Richards and Dr. John Sabit, the medical director of the Reconciliation Lutheran Primary Health Care Unit.

JUBA JOURNAL PART III

1 June 2018

Our final day. Fifteen ladies helped so far. Women who have lived with fistula for a period of four months up to forty years! All dry now and rejoicing. Our Bible study is the story of

Hannah, which in Arabic means to pity. God had compassion on her and granted her one desire to have a son. How it resonated with the stories of these women we served this week.

We had only one case, a month old child with a fistula we think was caused by traumatic delivery. Dr. Andrew is involved with a study of fistula in women, that suggests as many as a quarter of fistulas are being caused by care givers at the time of delivery. So we need to do much more than teach women to deliver in a health facility. We need to teach the traditional birth attendants and improve our own medical care as well.



To have access to pediatric anaesthesia, we needed to rent a theatre in a private hospital. It went so well and the mother is relieved.

We continued the morning with a courtesy call at the OBG Department at the Juba Teaching Hospital. After which, we feasted and celebrated together with our colleagues at the Reconciliation Lutheran Church Community Center and Clinic. Throughout, we reflected on Pastor Matthews' marveling at the miracles of healing we were seeing.

In the end, we all agreed that we had seen miracles. Not only of healed bodies but of true fellowship across national and tribal boundaries. We felt God's hand upon our mission and pray that we may return again on a regular basis.



To God be the Glory!