

# Sudan Trip Report

## November 1–20, 2005

Doug Welch traveling with John Detterick, Executive Director of General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Debby Vial, Associate for the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program. Barry Almy, Sudan Liaison came from Khartoum to meet us and travel with us.

We went to the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) for a courtesy call. With John Detterick along it was important to acknowledge to them our presence in their area and to say hello. We heard very strongly and clearly from Rev. Samuel Muriguh, the General Secretary, that the PCEA highly values the partnership between our denominations.

One important discussion engaged the question: How does the move toward direct mission involvement of Presbyterians correlate with the decline in our ability to keep long-term mission personnel on the field?

We paid a visit to ACROSS. We have been partnering with ACROSS for many years as they seek to serve the people of southern Sudan in various evangelism, church growth and community development initiatives. Anthony Poggo is the present Executive Director of ACROSS and the first Sudanese to hold this position. Greg de Haan met with us and we had fruitful discussions on present work directions of ACROSS and ways in which the PCUSA might collaborate with them. Education and health were the central themes of this discussion as they are seen by the Sudanese to be of the most fundamental necessity.

Serendipitously, our presence at this time allowed us to attend the New Sudan Council of Churches dinner to honor the work of Haruun Ruun, the PCUSA mission co-worker who has served as the Executive Secretary over the past 10 years. John Detterick was asked to say a word of thanks from the PCUSA for Haruun's service.

We met with the Presbyterian Relief and Development Agency (PRDA) and heard an overview of present programs, providing us with an opportunity to catch up with how things are going. Joe Dyer, our mission co-worker assigned to PRDA, was with us as well as the Executive Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS). We were told that education has become the main theme of interest and need being expressed by the people of Sudan. The Education Department of the PCOS is lodged in PRDA. Health is the second area of focus that PRDA expressed as a critical need. The PCUSA has been looking for staff people to work in each of these areas for several years without success.

We had a long lunch with Dr. Haruun Ruun.. He is leaving to take up a position as a counselor to the president of Sudan.

We met with the General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Rev. Mvume Dandala, and Mr. Bright Mawudor, who is the finance and administration officer for the AACC. We were given an update on where the AACC is in reorganizing, setting a renewed vision for its ministry in Africa. They have cut their staff from 42 to 17 persons. They are now focusing on a role of bringing church leaders together from across Africa to discuss their mutual concerns and bring a united effort to the growth of the church in Africa.

On our trip to Loki on the Sudan border we traveled with the executive secretary, Rev. Oruzu Lokine, and Rev. Peter Makuac, the associate moderator. We arrived and checked in to AFEX camp, which is

right across from the PRDA compound, very convenient. AFEX is clean, well run, and affordable at \$50, full board. We met later in the day with the PCOS leaders, at which time we heard from each of the departments about what they are doing. It was a good chance for updates and for talking about the trends in the PCUSA. John Detterick presented a large ceramic cross to the moderator to acknowledge our partnership. Education was lifted up as the most critical need for the people of southern Sudan.

We traveled to Kakuma Refugee Camp to worship. All the Kakuma Presbyterian congregations came together for this, and the people numbered 1,737. It was hot. John preached from Jeremiah 29 about how God will bring the people back from exile. Each of the rest of us was able to bring greetings as well. Upon arriving back in Loki we were informed that the pilot who was to fly us did not return as expected so our flight into Sudan was cancelled. The people in Akobo were expecting us and had come out in large numbers to greet us. In the evening we had dinner in the PRDA compound with the church leaders.

In our meeting with the PCOS leaders they raised the following issues:

1. As they consider moving back to Sudan they see the need for the leadership of the two branches of the PCOS to come together to plan how that will happen. They are waiting for PCOS-M to respond to this and we encouraged them to take the initiative and provide some further details as to what this would look like, where, when, how, etc.
2. The need to renovate the headquarters in Akobo. We talked about how this fit into their overall priorities and said that regardless of what might come from the meeting between the two branches they will always need to renovate Akobo.
3. The desire to continue to have opportunities to attend courses at CORAT (Christian Organizations Research Advisory Trust) and to have a woman and youth attend a course at Mindolo Ecumenical Center in Zambia. We explained that this is also our priority and we will continue to do as much as we can on this.
4. The need for increased funding to PCOS departments as previously “government controlled” areas of Sudan become open to their outreach. We learned that transport inside Sudan will be difficult for some time to come and that this is perhaps not as pressing an issue. Of course the departments are always looking for help.
5. A desire to have an annual grant of \$2–3,000 to cover medical expenses of the pastors.
6. A need for scholarships to provide training in a wider number of fields to meet church needs. They specifically talked about a mechanic and an accountant. We went over the process for applying for scholarships from the PC(USA).
7. A desire to send Mary Simon to East Africa Bible College to prepare her to join the ministry. They were told that this would probably be given high priority.
8. They told us they have asked Mission-21 for a woman to come work with their women’s department.
9. The need for a core budget.
10. They asked about a consultation as they held in the past with all the international partners. I told them that it was up to them to seek it but that it could not be done as we did in the past in that it was simply a place to ask for funds and give insufficient reports.
11. They wondered about the chance for someone from the PCOS-A making a visit to the USA.
12. They again raised the fact that they want to send a team to Juba to look into moving PRDA there.

We met again in the PRDA offices, this time with John Nduna of CEAS and Luke Asikoye of PDA present. PRDA has been talking about how CEAS does not seem to be living up to their expectations in bringing them to a sense of when and how PRDA will become self-sufficient. They have a relationship with CEAS that has CEAS being a supporting partner to build their capacity to stand alone. The PC(USA), as a PRDA partner, encouraged this meeting to allow their concerns to be aired and hopefully bring resolution. It was a positive meeting and the PRDA leadership felt that this was a

good step forward. We encouraged them to come to the PRDA partners meeting, now planned for January, with a time line and exit strategy to present so that everyone can be working on the “same page.”

We met with Johnson Mbillah and Angele Dogbe-Wilson of the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA). The PC(USA) has been partnering with PROCMURA for many years, and this visit was to reaffirm this partnership and to have Debby Vial and John Detterick become more aware of who and what PROCMURA is.

Anna Kima, an International Peacemaker from Sudan, came by to visit. We spent much of the morning talking with her about Sudan and her ministry in Sudan over her life. She appreciated the International Peacemaking program and how it allows Presbyterians to learn about other countries and their concerns.

Barry, Debby and Doug left for Khartoum by Kenya Airways, arriving about 8:30 p.m. (John Detterick returned to the USA.) We had our entry permits in hand upon arrival and after checking our paperwork at the immigration desk we went into the visa office to have our visas put in our passports—\$160 each. Once that was done we passed through customs with a wave of the hand and were welcomed outside by Yousif and Ida Matar of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC).

We met with the Redstone Presbytery group around the hotel, this being their last day in Sudan after a 10-day trip. Redstone Presbytery women met in the morning with women from SPEC and the men met with a man who converted from Islam to Christianity to hear his story. We had a closing service of worship with the SPEC Nuer congregation, which ended with a hosted lunch. I enjoyed visiting with Daniel Hamad, the previous SPEC General Secretary, over the lunch as he told me of the work that is going on in Darfur through SPEC.

We had a first meeting with the PCOS-M leaders, at which time they shared their appreciation for the work that the PC(USA) has been doing to help bring peace to Sudan. They also remarked on how the PCUSA has been faithful over the years in its support of the PCOS and the people of Sudan. A brief meeting with the Sudan Council of Churches revealed that they are in a transition stage.

Debby Vial, James Aguer, and I flew to Malakal and spent four days there. We visited the church compound and heard about the vision of the PCOS for rebuilding. There is much work to be done. I have been trying to get to Malakal for years at the request of our partners but have always been unsuccessful in getting there. Malakal is one of the first mission stations and the traditional headquarters of the PCOS. Here they are not a displaced church. Both SPLM-A and Government of Sudan military were present in the town.

The remaining days of the trip were spent visiting the various departments of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church. We visited with the women of the church, the youth, the Gereif Bible School, a SPEC Nuer congregation, and the executive committee of SPEC. We were hosted at a very nice dinner on our final evening in Khartoum. The people of SPEC are clearly concerned about the future of Sudan. They look at the referendum in six years with trepidation, not knowing where the outcome will place them. The “southerners” in Sudan are almost unanimously for a separation of the south from the north. Many people in SPEC are southerners and others are northerners. Where will this place them? They also strongly spoke of the efforts of the Government of Sudan for Arabization and Islamization. They feel forced to become both of these or face extreme discrimination. The Christians and non-Arabs are concerned about the increasing support for this from outside Sudan, which will increase this pressure. Will it really be possible for the people of Sudan to live together as one country?