

MAKING THE LOVE OF GOD VISIBLE



Visiting Sudan in March was a challenging but uplifting experience. We were severely tested by scorching sunshine and rough roads, but also riveted by the Sudanese Christians irrepressible joy in knowing God. It is hard for us to rise to their compelling level of faith whilst at the same time being stunned by the daily circumstances they have to overcome. Yet repeatedly we saw ways in which the church in Sudan is not just surviving, but reaching into the forgotten corners of their own world, making the love of God visible.

Up the White Nile

Milano Gibrail is the Chancellor of Wad Medani Diocese. He spoke with quiet wonder about the achievements of an outreach team he had participated in. Led by Bishop Saman Farjalla, a team of eleven people from Wad Medani travelled to the southern edges of the diocese to visit refugee camps pitched along the White Nile near Al Jabalayn. Bp Saman had made an exploratory visit in 2020 to understand the needs of the people living there, predominantly Shilluk people who have fled from the violence of South Sudan. He found traumatized people, including many widows, orphans, and disabled people, with no help and no peace. Women are said to form 85% of the population of Kor Alwaral camp.

In the camps they found some ECSS clergy, but no organized leadership. During the time of their

visitation they consecrated four church centres, ordained six deacons and two priests who had papers from Uganda, licensed nine lay readers and 44 Mothers Union workers who had been appointed by the women, giving them their sash and episcopal badge. 252 people were confirmed amongst the 3,000 who joined the Episcopal Church at that time. Milano said, "The Lord magnified our work: we were filled with joy, and give thanks and glory to the Lord."

Their visit was made possible by a grant from Relay Trust who funded transport, teaching materials, and food. Half the budget was spent on sorghum flour, meat, vegetables, oil and charcoal, to equip themselves to live amongst and share with those in the camps. The plan is to follow up the significant impact of this visit with another outreach visit in May. They have appealed to Relay Trust for more funds, and this time plan to involve Abp Paul Yugusuk of Central Equatoria and Abp Joseph of Malakal, as well as Abp Ezekiel of Sudan, to help these homeless people feel welcomed and recognised. If it happens, it will be the first time



ECS and ECSS staff have really worked together on the ground across the border.

Down the Blue Nile

Many miles north, on the Blue Nile are two church centres founded in 2015. The Diocese of Wad Medani established them to carry out its vision of transforming society through the establishment of Christian religious, spiritual, social and moral values. We visited with Canon Ibrahim, the Archdeacon for Gezira State, two MU Diocesan Coordinators, and Andrew Macek, the Relief & Development Coordinator.



At Wad Rawah we met with the Church of the Good Shepherd, their building crammed with people including many children. The church centre is at the outer edge of the village on barren ground. The congregation long for a kindergarten and a church school, to help their children. But they have no land registered for the church, and are anxious that their building and even their very homes may be bulldozed with little warning. Everything is so much more established compared with life in the camps, but still there is no abiding place for them.

At Genned they have just succeeded in registering a plot of land on which they have permission to

build. At present they have no building at all, meeting to worship under trees where they have cemented ranks of low walls to act as pews. Andrew Macek said that the cost of the works needed to build a centre is too great for them to even contemplate beginning, but if some funding can be found he believed the congregations would give, as he felt they are generous at heart.

CASSS funding is given through the centre of ECS and ECSS and doesn't reach down this far. Their hopes and needs are being forwarded to Leeds Diocese, the only partner that may stand with them in their isolation, and build with them.



The Church Association
for
Sudan and South Sudan
formerly known as Sudan Church Association