

Serving South Sudan

A Report from Chuck Dennis & Dennis Cady
December 14, 2012



First Building Constructed

We are pleased that the first building on the campus of Jonglei Christian Vocational Boarding School is complete. It is actually two steel shipping containers covered with a gable roof which also shelters a ten foot concrete porch on all four sides. This will serve as storage for building materials and equipment during the construction of the rest of the campus, but once the school is operational, it will be the workshop area. Being a vocational school, we will have both traditional classrooms and workshop facilities. While we are excited about the progress, we are anxious to see construction underway on classrooms, dormitories, a kitchen, teacher's apartments, and an auditorium/ dining hall/study hall. We made our 4th trip this year to South Sudan November 26th – December 12th. We struggle to be patient with the bureaucratic process in the newest country in the world,

submitting plans to contractors, receiving bids that are much too high, submitting revised plans, and receiving revised bids. Then we remember that 11 ½ months ago neither of us had ever been to Africa, let alone Bor, the capital of Jonglei State which we have chosen as our focus. During this year, we have learned about the history and culture of South Sudan, researched needs and opportunities, identified how we can make a significant difference in the lives of people, secured land, moved a man from the east African nation of Ghana to head up this effort, and planted a church; most of this from 9,142 air miles away, while also being very involved in works in Indonesia and Haiti and running our own businesses.



Certificate of Registration

Aguer Gak and Chuck are smiling because Starfish Foundation has received official recognition as an NGO (Non-Government Organization). This makes possible exempting us from import taxes for materials

brought into the country to construct the school. This is huge! South Sudan produces virtually nothing. All materials used in construction, down to the paint, nails, and wire to tie reinforcement steel together must be brought from Uganda or Kenya. The tax exempt status will save about 24% of the cost of materials. Construction costs are three to four times what they are in Texas and it is difficult to insure construction is of comparable quality. It remains to be seen if that is even possible. One of the reasons for things being so expensive is the condition of the roads. Some of them would barely qualify by our definition of roads. Then there is the problem of weather. South Sudan has a six month dry season and a six month rainy season. During the rainy season, transporting materials and completing buildings that are not already “in the dry” are significantly restricted. As much as sixty percent of the retail price of everything sold in the marketplace is due to transportation cost.

As we continue to push as aggressively as we can, getting the school open is going to be a series of hurry and wait..... hurry and wait. As we wait, we see the opportunity to give attention to the spiritual part of our work. As the reality of a school gets closer it is difficult to communicate

how fortunate the two of us feel to be on the front lines of helping people who have suffered so much during the longest civil war in Africa and have few open doors before them. Yet we want to do more. A solution to the personal and collective problems in South Sudan must have Jesus at its center. **Serving South Sudan** is a holistic ministry.



Bible Seminar

Pictured are most of the 32 men who attended a Bible Seminar December 8th. This was the idea of and planned by the young church in Bor. Dennis spoke then fielded questions from the floor. Chuck led singing. Attention was excellent and questions were good. Our appeal was for a return to the Bible on the part of all who believe in Jesus. We called attention to Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17:20, 21. We drew the attention of those who listened to the fact that the confusion which exists in the Christian world due to the multiplicity of denominations is neither Bible based nor pleasing to God. We explained that we had come to Bor not to establish a new church but restore the church of the 1st Century. The message was well received by those present. Several said they wished the seminar would have been longer and asked when we

would have another. We pray the seeds planted will bear fruit.



Christian Literature Center

Our experience in a number of other developing countries has proven the value of Christian literature, especially Bible correspondence courses. A 10' x 15' space has been rented in the central market area of Bor Town. Students are presently offered two courses of study. Dennis wrote the first eleven lesson course and we are using a thirteen lesson course written by someone else. We believe this will teach valuable truths and create many follow up opportunities for local Christians who have agreed to staff the center on a rotation basis. Tracts will also be offered. Bibles can be available at affordable prices, and given free in special cases. Funds are needed to rent this place and photocopy the courses and tracts. Rent is \$150 monthly. No printing facilities are available, beyond photocopy businesses. The cost is \$4 per course. Tracts are 30 cents each. Bibles cost \$6. New Testaments cost \$2. Our experience has also taught us that some supporters prefer to give to specific projects: The literature center has many bite size needs. Would you be able to pay the rent or print by photocopy a specific number of

correspondence courses or tracts or provide funds for Bibles? You tell us what your money is to be used for and it will be used for that.

We Need Your Help

We continue to be the largest contributors to **Serving South Sudan**. Trips to Africa, travelling to present the story to those who will listen, and the printing and mailing of these reports to those who receive them by traditional mail are expenses paid by us. EVERY CENT given to Starfish Foundation to help with the construction of the school or do other things is tax deductible and WILL REACH SOUTH SUDAN. If you can help with a one time or monthly contribution it would be so appreciated. Checks should be payable to Starfish Foundation and sent to the address below. Some plan end-of-the-year giving. If you are among those would you consider involvement in **Serving South Sudan**? Contact us with any questions you have.

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