

Celebrating 20 years of ministry partnership in Sudan and South Sudan

In 2004, Redstone Presbytery was seeking an international mission partnership, based on Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations". We asked PC(USA) World Mission for guidance, preferably in a place that was "warm and sunny." Rather than a locale with easy access, though, we were met with a challenge: the Presbyterian Church in Sudan was in the midst of the greatest humanitarian crisis in the world. Would we go to a place where:



- Starvation and lack of drinking water stressed millions
- Terrorists from the Islamic "Janjaweed" were violently and systematically persecuting civilians in the north of Sudan and Darfur
- Christians were under stress from the government in most areas of daily life
- Hundreds of thousands were living in Internally Displace Persons camps
- The mortality rate for women giving birth was the highest in the world
- The Presbyterian churches founded by Scottish missionaries in the 1890's had planted the seeds of Christianity. Schools founded by American missionaries in the 1920's helped spread the growth. Now these brothers and sisters in Christ were crying out to a mostly indifferent world.

Guided by help from Shenango and Trinity presbyteries, a group from Redstone visited Sudan. The report in November of 2004 from Rev. Stanley Bhaskar, Elder Patty Summerville, and Rev. Ken White was inspiring.

The trio from Redstone reported that the church in Sudan was vibrant in spite of daily persecution. Congregations in Omdurman, Khartoum, and El Obeid were active as well as "preaching centers" numbering about 68. Nile Theological College and the Gerief Bible School were training pastors and church educators. The gratitude of the churches in Sudan to long-awaited prayer was summed up by one elderly Sudanese church goer. She told the group, "We can't believe that you came. Praise God."

Redstone Presbytery voted unanimously to engage in the partnership.



Why renew the partnership after 20 years?

Sudan and South Sudan rarely draw the world's headlines. Americans tend to be more focused elsewhere, rather than on what UNICEF describes as a "wave of atrocities" currently under way against children in Sudan. Since last April over three million children have been displaced by fighting, and over 700,000 face acute malnutrition. The Darfur region of Sudan at the time our presbytery partnership was formed in 2004 endured what is widely described as the first genocide of the 21st Century. Now armed militias are once more killing and raping villages, burning churches, and destroying farmlands belonging to particular ethnic groups – among these, our Christian brothers and sisters.

Many of you remember our friend, Dr. Aida Weran Nasser who had taught at Nile Theological College in Khartoum, Sudan. She has fled to Juba, South Sudan, where she is teaching at the new Nile Theological College there. Some of her family remain in Khartoum despite the desperate conditions there and an increase in anti-Christian violence. Many other South Sudanese friends have also endured great difficulties beginning with their relocation to South Sudan, as South Sudan became the newest country in the world in 2011.

Redstone has supported the following ministries:

- A ministry of prayer and presence, sharing visits back and forth
- Worshiping together, growing from the richness of each other's cultures
- Educational support of Nile Theological College and Gerief Bible School
- Providing clean drinking water in wells, and emergency food in IDP camps
- Self-development of people through fishing projects, fruit trees, and others.
- Women's ministries: sewing machines and children's clothing, and scholarships.

It is always humbling to receive the genuine concern through e-mails and prayers sent to us by our friends in Sudan and South Sudan. During the pandemic; during floods and hurricanes, and all sorts of upheaval, letters and calls from the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church and the South Sudan Evangelical Church let us know of their concern and support for us here in the United States. In this; through visits to each other's homes and churches; and in the work we do together, the Holy Spirit bears witness to the reality that in Jesus Christ we are indeed friends. We are richly blessed.