

# Serving in Sudan

NOVEMBER,  
2003

## God replaced challenges with CHALLENGES

Like Many people in south Sudan, Pastor Andrew Neeta has led a hard life. He is willing to work long hours and has many gifts from God. What's on Pastor Andrew's heart today is the spiritual condition of his people, so he works hard and prays harder that God would lead the people of south Sudan.

Pastor Andrew came from Liang, south Sudan and is from the Mabaan tribe. He was born in 1963, just before the missionaries were forced to leave. He migrated north and was working in Khartoum at age 15 as a servant in a Muslim home, where he learned Arabic. A friend invited him to church, where he heard the gospel and hymns in his heart language. At church, he heard "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus" in Mabaan and God convicted him that his heart was not right with God. He realized that God loved him and that was more important than anything else. He responded by giving his life to God.

He started attending church regularly and soon became a leader in the church in a displacement camp for southern Sudanese, surrounded by barbed wire. The displacement camp was full of people from many tribes from the south and he quickly earned their respect based on his love for God and caring for people.

A leader in the church was beaten and died at hospital. The police said he was hit by a car but people in the camp knew this wasn't true—he had been taken from his home in the night. Andrew started praying for his people and felt that God was leading him back to south Sudan, where it was more dangerous and life is much more difficult. He felt they were "sheep without a shepherd" and he was being called to lead.

First, he asked his wife to pray about leaving the north. They felt they should include



*Pastor Andrew Neeta has a big smile and a vision for the people in south Sudan.*

the children in the decision, so they all prayed for 15 days about returning south.

When they were all in agreement, he took all of their money and bought bus tickets from Khartoum to the Ethiopian border. When they got to the border, they sold their clothes to buy food and hired a guide to guide them to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For days, Pastor Andrew carried one child on his back, another on his shoulders and one across his chest, next to his Bible. Two children walked. His wife carried water on her head. They arrived in Addis Ababa two months later, exhausted and broke.

In Ethiopia they were granted refugee status and sent to a camp near the border with south Sudan. Pastor Andrew was ordained as a pastor there and ministered to people from various tribes, including Mabaan, Dinka, Nuer and Uduk, all worshipping God together.

He stayed for about a year, but he still felt that God had called him to minister in south Sudan, where the needs are greater. He crossed the border to Kurmuk, Sudan, where he pastored

the Mabaan church for two months. Then he moved south to Yabus. There he helped the churches work more together and taught church elders to minister to the church, such as praying with the sick and talking to people about Jesus. He taught them to go hut-to-hut and pray with people in their homes.

Not long ago, he was in Yabus at the medical clinic when 16 bombs fell nearby. The foreign doctor heard the bombs falling and left in the middle of writing his prescription, muttering that if they didn't get out of there, Pastor Andrew wouldn't need it! Pastor Andrew hid in a foxhole until the bombing stopped, then carried wounded to hospital.

Since then, Pastor Andrew has moved his family further south, to be where Servant's Heart is working intensively. He is overseeing the construction of new water wells and helping Servant's Heart start schools. Because of his excellent English, Arabic and Mabaan language skills, Pastor Andrew has helped with translating at pastor training and helping different tribes work together. He is a great encouragement to the churches in the region because he chose to return despite many challenges.

God gave Pastor Andrew the gift of a voice that carries well, even without a microphone. Servant's Heart recently showed the Jesus film in Sudanese Arabic to people who had never seen it. Pastor Andrew realized that many people couldn't understand the film because they didn't understand the trade language well enough. He stepped in to translate the film for three hours, shouting so everyone could hear. It is this compassion that people respect and respond to in Pastor Andrew.

Pastor Andrew has asked us to tell you that there are over 75 churches in the area and his goal is for them to grow in the knowledge and grace of God. Please pray for and help us support Pastor Andrew as he reaches out to people who've never heard the Gospel.

The family sold their clothes to buy food.

## Two Prayer Warriors Make a Difference

They weren't very big. And they weren't very strong. But they believed in a God who was both. Mary "Miss Mary" Beam and A. Elizabeth "Miss Betty" Cridland traveled to a remote corner of Sudan under Sudan Interior Mission in 1942, unsure of what they'd find.

On her way to the Blue Nile from Ethiopia, Miss Mary's boat was sunk by a German U-boat and she was briefly held as a German P.O.W. She later told the story of standing on the shore of the Nile, watching the boat sink with all her earthly possessions. She pressed on.

They were both graduates of Columbia Bible College with a heart for Africa. They served in the Blue Nile region of south Sudan from 1942—1964 and met all kinds of challenges, but their goal was to see people come to a personal relationship with God. They translated the New Testament into Uduk and taught literacy to hundreds of Uduk children. They established a school, orphanage, and several churches. Forced to leave in 1964 with the missionaries across Sudan, they had seen only about 300 converts in 22 years and they were discouraged.

They both went on to serve in other capacities and prayed for the Uduk people daily, many by name. They never gave up, even without contact with this remote tribe for years. Without mail service, they had to trust that God was caring for the Uduks.

The Uduks experienced severe persecution from 1986 to 1991 and many of them were killed in gruesome and terrible ways in order to persuade them to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. It is estimated that thousands of Uduks died during that period. Many of those who survived have fiercely opposed the Government of Sudan and the Islamic Sharia law they imposed in 1986.

In 1998, Dennis Bennett visited the Sudan as a guest of Baroness Caroline Cox of Christian Solidarity Worldwide. When he returned to the U.S., he contacted Miss Mary and Miss Betty as some of the few people in the West that had known contact with the Uduks. At their request, Dennis hand-carried the first letter from the ladies to the Uduk church in Kurmuk in 1999. Elder Timothy read the letter aloud at the Sunday church service. He became excited and started beating his chest and shouting. He excitedly proclaimed, "I'm alive! I'm alive!" He was thrilled to find these faithful prayer warriors had been praying for him daily since their departure in 1964, when he was only nine years old. His mother had been their housekeeper and he attended their school to learn to read in Uduk. He was over-

whelmed that they had cared enough to pray for him for all these years.

Miss Mary and Miss Betty weren't afraid of the Uduk "medicine men" that worked magic on people to cure their ills. At night, they would sneak into the dark when the medicine men would beat their drums and quietly watch. As

The medicine men's "magic" would stop.

the Christians approached, the medicine men's "magic" would stop. Their drums would stop. They would look in the jungle and find two Christian ladies praying to a God who was more powerful than their magic. As a

result, the Uduk medicine men were some of the first to believe in the one true God and the blood of Jesus Christ. They were able to share their relationship with the powerful God often because people came to them in difficulties.

The Uduks have seen a lot of persecution since 1964, but virtually everyone in this tribe considers himself a believer in Christ today, thanks to the pioneering work of these two dedicated missionaries. Both Miss Mary and Miss Betty recently passed away at the ages of 90 and 95. They will be missed by all who knew them, but especially by the Uduk people they cared for faithfully for over 60 years.

## The Church is Alive and Well in South Sudan

When Dennis Bennett first visited Sudan, he had been studying the political and economic systems that had created such a difficult place for Christians to survive. He didn't expect to find such a vibrant church, spiritually alive, yet physically suffering.

The persecution of the past twenty years has taken many forms, but pastors were killed, families were asked at gunpoint to convert to Islam or be killed and families were herded into huts and run over by a 50-ton tank.

The missionaries left in 1964, but the Holy Spirit was active! The seeds that were sown left only a few hundred known Christians in this region, but many seeds were planted. In this area, these seeds grew into thousands of Christians among the Mabaan, Uduk, Nuer, and

Dinka tribes, where the New Testament was translated into their languages. The New Testament is also in Mayak, but the small church among the Mayak faces daily opposition from local Muslims and witchdoctors.

Many tribes in this area remain "folk Islamic", where people attend mosque on Friday, but see the witchdoctor when they are suffering. The Koma, Berta, Mayak and Jimjung tribes are primarily folk Islamic and have few, if any, Christians among them. Pray with us for evangelistic efforts from neighboring tribes that are reaching out to these people. They don't



Dennis Bennett (far right) with Yabus church leadership and Stuart Windsor from Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

have the New Testament in their languages and must learn about God through other languages.

## Bible Distribution Continues to Remote Sudanese People

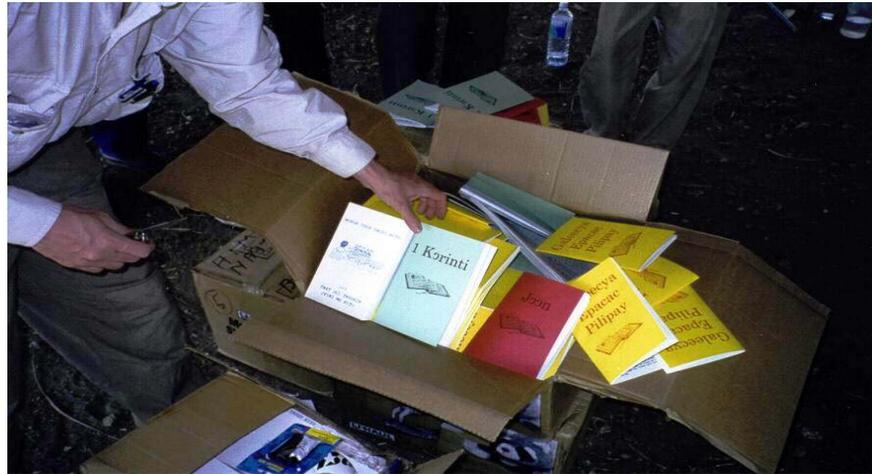
When Dennis Bennett visited Yabus, Sudan in October, 1998, he promised to return to the growing church with copies of God's Word. Translation of the New Testament was begun prior to 1964 into the Uduk and Mabaan languages, but copies that were distributed by missionaries decades before had been destroyed by the occupying government of Sudan troops, annual monsoon rains and pervasive termites. By the time Dennis visited in 1998, almost all copies had been destroyed and literacy was dying out while the church was growing dynamically. The Mabaan church in Yabus had grown from six to 300 people in 18 months and there were only three Bibles and one hymnal between them. There was a real sense of urgency to feed God's people with the living Word. When the church leaders were asked for their priorities, Bibles were at the top of the list.

Dennis returned to the U.S. to request copies of the scriptures from the personal libraries of missionaries who were evicted in 1964. By disassembling old copies and reproducing them, school children at Aurora Christian School in Aurora, IL were able to make copies of Mabaan language version of John, Romans, I Corinthians, and Galatians, Ephesians & Philippians in four brightly-colored booklets. Kentview Christian School in Kent, WA helped raise money for shipping them to Africa. Many of you also helped.

Simultaneously, students at Seattle Christian School in WA made photocopies of the Uduk version of John, Romans, I Corinthians, and Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians. Thanks to these efforts, Dennis distributed these booklets in Blue Nile only six months after committing to return with scripture. His nickname became "The Man Who Returns".

The booklets put copies of scriptural passages in tribal hands expeditiously and inexpensively until the entire New Testament could be reprinted. Dennis partnered with personal donors and Voice of the Martyrs(VOM)(US) to reprint 500 sets of Mabaan and 500 Uduk New Testaments delivered in May, 2000 to 75 churches throughout Southern Blue Nile and refugee camps in Ethiopia, where many Uduk and Mabaan Christians had fled during recent persecution.

In January, 2000, VOM(US), VOM(Canada), and Youth With A Mission(YWAM), partnered with



*Copies of books of the Bible being distributed in Blue Nile, thanks to US schoolchildren.*

Dennis to conduct pastor training in Kurmuk, for all Christian pastors in the region. They weren't even sure how many churches there were, though Dennis had personally scouted out at least 33. 45 pastors showed up to learn how to lead their flocks! Everyone was glad for the pastoral training and the fellowship with other regional pastors.

In May, 2001 Dennis was asked to return to assist in an area newly-freed from government occupation, since the people were in dire straits. Dennis and Diane Bennett made their first trip



*Uduk women with new Bibles*

together into Eastern Upper Nile, armed with 400 vest-pocket New Testaments and emergency relief aid, such as blankets donated by VOM(US). They met Christians from the Buldit tribe, whose language has never been written down. The Buldit asked that Servant's Heart begin a Bible translation program immediately, along with schools and agricultural tools and seed. The needs were great, but Bibles were again at the top of the list.

In January, 2002, Servant's Heart brought 1,000 Bibles in the Nuer language to Eastern Upper Nile in partnership with the Scott Foundation and Open Doors/Across. 1,000 Mabaan hymnals were also reprinted and shipped into Sudan.

Translation efforts continue in Mabaan and in January, 2003, we delivered 600 revised Mabaan language New Testaments and conducted another pastor training seminar for 50 Mabaan pastors and evangelists in partnership with VOM(Canada).

Bibles have also been distributed to refugees from south Sudan in North America. We have over one thousand Bibles awaiting funding to deliver them into Sudan.

While Servant's Heart works to minister to the whole person, we recognize that God's Word is the highest priority in the heart language of the people. The challenges are many, since goods need to be flown into this remote area, which is costly and often dangerous. We couldn't do it without the partnership with AIM-Air. Please help us deliver scripture into this remote area where people are hungry for God's Word.



## Mission Statement

As a responsible Christian organization, Servant's Heart seeks to honor God by serving the Christian church in restricted-access regions of the world with the goal of self-sufficiency. Servant's Heart addresses the community's immediate relief and developmental needs of spiritual growth, educational programs, public health and primary medical care, and agricultural and economic infrastructure.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you and watch over you.  
Many are the woes of the wicked,  
but the Lord's unfailing love  
surrounds the man who trusts in him."

Psalm 32: 8,10 (NIV)

**We're on the Web!**  
[servantsheartrelief.org](http://servantsheartrelief.org)

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All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Dear Friends:

It has been five years since Dennis first visited south Sudan as a guest of Baroness Caroline Cox and Christian Solidarity Worldwide. We have moved from a personal ministry based on a single commitment to return to Sudan with Bibles to an organization of 65 people doing spiritual, physical, educational and medical development. We don't do anything for the people they can do for themselves.

In Sudan and Kenya, our full-time office staff, medical workers, and teachers are all African and report to our office in the US. We have a small office in Nairobi, Kenya to facilitate teams of short-term volunteers, goods and finances in transit from North America to Sudan. In Sudan, we have several small compounds of native grass huts protected by grass walls for us to work. We can hear lions across the jungle and leopards hunting outside our compound. Monkeys chatter in the trees. The wildlife abounds while God's people are suffering. They need our help to recover from years of persecution and devastation.

This month we have focused on the progress we're making in Spiritual issues because we want you to know that His spirit is alive and well in south Sudan! We believe that God has called us to work in this area to help provide scripture and develop spiritual leadership while He moves in the hearts of his people. Join with us in prayer for the people of God in Blue Nile and Eastern Upper Nile, Sudan. We give thanks for your partnership in this endeavor.

May God richly bless you! *Dennis and Diane Bennett*

## Together We Make a Difference

Over the past five years, Servant's Heart teams have walked from village to village throughout the Blue Nile and Eastern Upper Nile, visiting with pastors and praying with subsistence farmers, refugees, mothers and orphans. The needs are many, but Bibles are usually at the top of the list of requests. Schools are often next, since many people don't know how to read the Bible or write in their own language.

You can help us send Bibles and Bibles on tape with hand-cranked tape players, re-build churches buildings, like the one to the right, and train pastors and evangelists with your gifts.

Evangelism and church development is the responsibility of local church leadership. It is common for evangelists to walk ten miles to another village, usually to visit people from another tribe, where they speak another language. The evangelist's goal is to tell them the Good News.

The evangelists in Daga Post have asked us to pray for converts among the neighboring tribes that have no known Christians. Specifically, please pray for a harvest of 50 Koma converts this year. The Koma have only three books of the Bible in their language completed in in the 1960's and literacy is nonexistent. There are Koma children attending our school for the first time this year, where their teachers will present the gospel story. Pray with us that God will bless outreach among this remote tribe.



*The church in Kurmuk, devastated by ammunition while people were asked to renounce their faith and killed.*

Few pastors and lay leaders in this area have even been to high school, but they have a heart for God and to shepherd His people. They have few tools but the Bible and His Spirit to guide them. Through the ministry of Servant's Heart, we have brought American, Canadian, British and African pastor trainers to facilitate the development of the indigenous church. We have Bibles ready to ship to Sudan. Partner with us to help these remote indigenous churches grow and develop. You can help provide Bibles, literacy training and spiritual training with your gifts.

Paul says in Philippians 1:3 (NIV), "I thank my God every time I remember you." We are grateful for your support of these efforts to support this church devastated by persecution and physical dangers.