

UPDATE DEBBIE BLANE – SOUTH SUDAN

Dear Friends,

This has been an unsettling past six months, and in this past year the longest I have been in one place has been the three and a half months that I spent recently in Zambia on Temporary Assignment.

In January I facilitated/taught a Contextual Bible Study methodology in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In this training I walked a group of women through the method developed by Gerald West of South Africa. We then both practiced the method by doing a Bible Study and then discussed how to apply the method in everyday life. This included a discussion of presenting women in refugee camps with a study while there are nervous guards about. I told the women that is not a lie to simply say that they are there to pray with the women. The study was hosted in the home of my colleague the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Weber.

On February 1st of this year I flew to Lusaka, Zambia. I was in Zambia for three and a half months and taught two different sets of students while I was there. The first set of students was earning a certificate in Missions. The second set was a group of six women in the Women's Program. This program is designed as an educational experience for the wives of the Bachelor of Theology students. One day I am sure it will become the Spouse's Program and will be adapted to include the husbands of the women who are training to be pastors!

May 16th I began the journey back to the United States. I broke the journey into two pieces, first from Lusaka to Addis Ababa. I spent the weekend in Addis Ababa and was able to preach a last time at the Anyuak worship service where I have been welcomed from time to time over the past four years. The Anyuaks are a local people group whose population is found in both South Sudan and Ethiopia.

The second leg of the journey from Addis Ababa to Seattle, Washington included two stops. The first was in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and the second was in Frankfurt, Germany. While we did not disembark the plane in Jeddah I can now say that I have been on Saudi soil! We took on passengers and they were a colorful and assorted group of people so it was an intriguing stopover. In Frankfurt, Germany I was able to buy a freshly made loaf of whole wheat bread as a gift for my daughter and son-in-law in Seattle!

I am now on Itineration Assignment in the United States until at least the end of August. I am preaching and doing educational forums here in the Seattle area and I will be a Mission Advisory Delegate in Detroit, Michigan in June. I will be attending the Cascades Presbytery June Presbytery meeting. This is quite nice as this is my Presbytery of membership. Finally I will be going to Pennsylvania for the New Wilmington Mission Conference and staying after that for a few days of preaching and forums with the people of Shenango Presbytery.

There is no word yet on when the Nile Theological College of South Sudan will reopen. The news from South Sudan is quite grim. Rainy season has arrived and with it is continued violence and continued hunger.

South Sudan, the students, faculty and staff of the Nile Theological College as well as the leadership of all of the churches of South Sudan and the government need our continued prayer.

As I said in my First Quarter 2014 newsletter: It is critical for our brothers and sisters in the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS), our mission partner in South Sudan, to know that our PCUSA partnership is strong and unbreakable during this their hour of greatest need. All of you who are reading this letter are a crucial part of the PCUSA continued engagement in mission in South Sudan. Please educate yourselves on the roots of the conflict so that you can educate others, advocating for the internally displaced people (IDP), the refugees (those who have crossed borders into other countries seeking safety) and for those who are sheltering in United Nations compounds within the country. Please consider giving financially to God's ministry through me. Your financial gifts are a concrete step to keeping the lines of communication open between PCUSA and PCOSS.

In Christ,
Debbie