

## **UPDATE DEBBIE BLANE, MALAKAL, SOUTH SUDAN** First Quarter 2014

Dear Friends,

The last two and a half months has been one of the most difficult times of my life and in the lives of my colleagues in Malakal and South Sudan.

I left Malakal on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013 to be gone for one month. I was looking forward to returning in order to begin packing to move to another house on the compound where I live, and to work further on class planning for my class that was to begin on February 10<sup>th</sup>.

I spent a week in Juba obtaining a six-month visa and left for Addis Ababa on December 13<sup>th</sup>. On December 15<sup>th</sup> the beginning of incredible and horrific violence broke loose in Juba, the capital of the country of South Sudan.

I do not know where most of my friends and partner (local church and Nile Theological College) co-workers are. I am only in contact with a handful of my students and do not know the whereabouts and the wellbeing of the rest of them.

Malakal has been one of the hardest hit towns in this violence and conflict. I had been told once that it was a garrison town in the civil wars between the south and the north of Sudan before the separation. Now I understand more of why. Malakal is on the River Nile, it has one of the only paved runways at its small airport and it is the gateway to the oil fields of the Upper Nile State of which it is the capital city.

I am heart broken over the ripping of the fabric of the South Sudanese society. While there is great resilience among the people, the fabric is perhaps weaker than was previously recognized.

The Mission Co-Workers of South Sudan are doing temporary assignments in different places while we abide in the Lord until we can return to the work of our hearts. Please pray for the South Sudanese and please pray for the Mission Co-Workers of Malakal and in the rest of the country and for the speedy ability to return to our places of doing the work of our God.

The desire of my heart is to be back in Malakal for the next semester of the Nile Theological College, which God willing (inshallah in Arabic) will be this coming September. I am not sure we will be able to pick up and begin again where we left off, as everyone and everything will be different.

For whatever anxiety there is about these new (re)encounters each with the other please pray for the gentle spirit of Jesus and the peace that passes all understanding to characterize each encounter and each new seeing as well. There has been great physical damage in Malakal, both to people and to the infrastructure. Atrocities are happening that should never happen to human beings and are being committed by other human beings who are deeply traumatized and can no longer feel the pain that they are inflicting. Please pray for resilience in the face of all that will stare us in the eyes upon our return.

Thank-you for your prayers and your love for the people of Malakal and the people in general of South Sudan. Love is greatest medicine.

In Christ,  
Debbie