I opened my computer to this beautiful stained glass image of Jesus’s feet. Blues, purples and gold’s lit from the sun shining behind and his sandals were the focus. It made me wish I could hear the stories those feet could tell of the roads traveled, the miracles witnessed, the joy, the laughter, the sorrow, the heartbreak, the sermons they preached and the lessons they taught. Then it occurred to me, each one of us in our own way has traveled in Jesus footsteps, we’ve walked miles in his shoes and experienced all the same things life has to offer and that God gave the gift of his son so we too could walk in his shoes.

This has been an interesting journey. Not one that any of us could have ever predicted. Not one any of us could have ever imagined and not one that anyone could have ever planned or prepared for. But along this journey I have been blessed to “walk a mile” in Jesus footsteps and in every one of those steps he has been right there; leading and guiding me in the paths He chose for me to travel. That has been part of the fun and excitement, the unknown in the adventure and the “where will it take me next.”

I never planned to be sitting in the US this summer. I planned to be slugging through the rains and the mud in Akobo, but here I sit. Getting a house ready to move into that I may only stay in for a few weeks, but that too is part of God’s plan. Painting is excellent therapy – physical as well as mental. It is a time for me to relax and reflect and to pray.

And in the reflection I find the footsteps and have time to look back on the places I have been and to experience the joy in the “now” as I listen to my granddaughter pray every night, “Thank you God for bringing Grandma home”. To answer the phone to my oldest granddaughter say “Grandma, I have a new idea for your house. What do you think about this...?” To receiving hugs from the oldest two grandsons, one is in college and the other is a teenager, which make them even more special because of their ages. I can still hear the laughter of the two middle granddaughters as they had discussions about the best way to paint the porch and shutters of my new “tiny mansion”, as christened by the youngest granddaughter. And to watch the littlest one as he was just learning to stand when I first came home to his full fledged running legs that go barreling through the house and yard.

I am grateful for this time to spend with family and friends as we discern my future in South Sudan. Several options are being explored and as soon as we have a final answer you will all be the first to know.

I am grateful for the opportunities to go and visit with you and to share the stories of where the footsteps have lead; for the opportunity to visit you and get to know you. I only wish there was enough time to come and see each and every one so that I could personally thank you.
South Sudan...

Juba... is rapidly changing and in many ways remaining the same as it has for centuries. There are signs of the rapid growth in the new buildings going up, and there are signs of life as it has always been as you drive through the streets and see the vacant plots of land where the returnees (people returning from the north and other places) are building their camps out of whatever scraps they can find on whatever vacant piece of land they can find until they are told to move... .

Akobo... where life is hard, people work hard, live hard, and pray hard but are determined to make a better life for themselves and their families. I have witnessed great joy, hard work, determination, dedication, great fear, great hope and sorrow and grief, along with a faith in God’s protection and provision that words cannot describe. I have walked “a mile” with them, witnessed miracles and the joy of celebrating each new day in ways most of us cannot even begin to imagine or understand...

Juba is a land of commitment through the NGO’s (Non-Government Organizations) who come to serve. I was privileged to work with one of our partners – IMA World Health – to provide relief supplies to the people of Pibor who were displaced by the fighting that forced them to flee their village and homes.
Ethiopia..

I had the opportunity to spend some time in one of the largest cities in Africa – Addis Ababa and in Gambela. The contrast from modern city to small village is eye opening...

Addis Ababa is a clash of cultures from ancient to modern, living and walking side by side...

Gambela...I had the privilege of spending some time with fellow Mission Co-Worker, Rachel Weller, and learn to live life as she does as she introduced me to this village of joy and laughter, hard work and great beauty...
South Africa is an amazing country of contrasts...from the vast wealth of Cape Town to images of the Apartheid that remind me South Sudan has far to go and great hopes for a future. I was given glimpses of the amazing beauty and power of God’s magnificent creation...

It is an honor to walk in the footsteps of God as I encounter the people, places and activities that God has put in my path throughout this journey to see and experience his work in this part of the world, to walk hand in hand with the people, to experience their great faith, their determination to not only survive, but thrive in the places and situations where God has placed them. My eyes have been opened by sharing a glimpse of their lives and my faith strengthened as I follow them as they wave their crosses high and rejoice with great songs and prayers of praise. It is with great joy that I anticipate our next steps together and it is with a very humble heart that I thank you for joining in this journey, for your love, your prayers and your support.

May God bless you and keep you,
Sharon

Prayer Requests:

For the people of South Sudan that they may find peace
For our mission co-workers who are working their
For discernment for all involved in working out the details of my future there