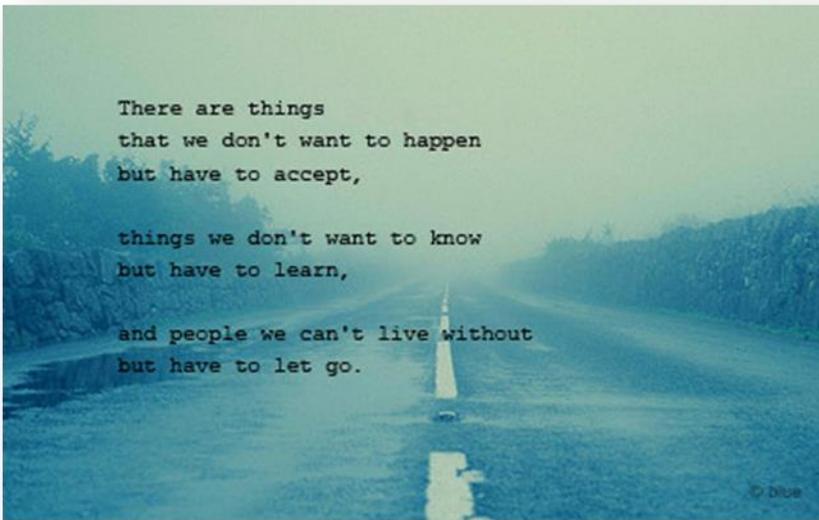


Greetings From Sharon Curry!



Greetings Friends,

This quote is a perfect expression of the many feelings and emotions I am experiencing right now.

After a long period of prayer and discernment, many, many discussions with both Louisville and Presbyterian Church of South Sudan staff, the decision has been made that I will not be returning to Akobo or to South Sudan.

It is with a broken heart that I type these words. If I was writing, you could see my tear stains on the paper. Being the eternal optimist that I am, I held out hope until the very last second that something could be worked out that would allow me to live there with the restrictions that would have been imposed to prevent, or at least, minimize the health risks associated with malaria for me, and for the violence to subside that would allow for my return.

As the quote says, I didn't want it to happen, but I have to accept it. I know I can't live without the people of Akobo and South Sudan, but I will have to let them go. They will always be a part of my heart and soul and I am eternally grateful for the opportunities I had in sharing their lives if only for a short time.

Paul Coelho says "If you are brave enough to say good bye, life will reward you with a new hello". In the coming weeks and days, we will begin looking for my "new hello" and to explore options for placement in other places in non-malaria zones. I don't know where God will be calling me next but I do know that it will involve mission and ministry in some way. That is the one constant in my life.

I know many of you have joined us on this journey of discernment through your words of encouragement, your prayers and your support. I can't thank you enough and invite you to continue as we move forward to a new phase of prayer and discernment for the future.

I will be available for speaking during the next few months and would love to come and share the story of God's work with you and your congregations, and thank you in person for your support of our work in South Sudan and throughout the world. There is more information about that below.

May God bless you and keep you my friends, and may the peace of Christ be with you all.

Sharon



Are you looking for a special program?
Do you want to know more about our work in South Sudan?
Are you interested in learning more about World Mission?

I would love the opportunity to come and share our story with you! It's been one of the greatest joys in my life to get to know you through sharing my stories, letters and blog, and through your letters and emails. I would love to come for a visit if you would consider inviting me. As my time in South Sudan comes to an end, we will be spending the next few months discerning next steps. During that discernment process I will be available to come and share our story with you.

If you're interested in having me come share with you, please let me know as soon as possible so I can work out a schedule.* I'll do this on a "first come, first served" basis, while also trying to be a good steward of time, money, and fuel by grouping visits together geographically. If you can help me connect with other churches or interested groups in your presbytery or synod, I'll be extra grateful!

I love to participate in any of your church activities – worship, preaching, giving a "minute" for mission or a children's message, etc. I also love to spend time with you during the Sunday School hour – combined classes, breakfasts, fellowship time, etc. When possible, it's best to have space other than (or in addition to) Sunday morning worship to share with greater depth and focus, and share the stories of what God is doing in South Sudan. I can do this through a variety of formats, from simple story telling to full Power Point presentations, and they can be adapted to any time frame you have available.

I always look forward to sharing about my time in Presbyterian World Mission and the amazing work God is doing in this part of the world, along with stories of the lives people lead. I know that your community's interests and experience are unique, so I would love to work with you in planning what topics, formats, etc. to plan a program that will be special for you and your members. Here is a mix-and-match menu of ideas— but these are definitely not the only possibilities!

Settings:

- Sunday school (any age group)
- Special church event (potluck or otherwise)
- Choir practice (if the director is willing to give up a rehearsal! But please don't ask me to sing, I am so bad my grandkids tell me not to.)
- Confirmation class
- Youth group
- Young adult group
- Clergy Bible study
- Men's or women's groups
- Prayer breakfast
- Retirement home or nursing home
- Classroom (elementary, high school, college, seminary)
- Campus ministry
- Mission committee meeting
- Presbytery or synod meeting

- Church camp or vacation Bible school

Topics (I can focus on a couple of these, or give a broad overview of Presbyterian World Mission engagement in South Sudan):

- One of our “Critical Global Initiatives”:
 - Addressing the root causes of poverty, especially as they impact women and children
 - Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, Seeking reconciliation amidst cultures of violence, including our own
- Doing mission in partnership with the global church
- Advocacy as Christian witness
- Opportunities for mission service, short and long term along with Young Adult Volunteers

A note on expenses:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will pay my salary during this time, so I neither need nor expect any kind of honorarium. My food, lodging, and travel expenses are not covered, however, and I will need your support in meeting those needs.

We can discuss specifics as we plan, but please know that I will try to group visits by region and share the cost of airfare or car rental among several churches or organizations where possible. I’m also happy to work with you if you have frequent flyer miles to donate for airfare, a borrowed car available for transportation within the area, etc. If you would like to invite me but cannot provide for my travel, please consider working with other churches or groups in your area to combine activities in the same week and share costs. If that is not possible, let me know and I’ll look for other ways to cover those expenses.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting me with your prayers, emails, and financial gifts. They are truly essential in making our work possible. I am excited about sharing the story with many of you in person during the coming months!

* You can reach by email (sharon.curry.south@gmail.com or sharon.curry@pcusa.org) or by phone (817) 736-6808