



Woman and Child in Pibor, South Sudan,
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The Journey

Never in My Wildest Dreams...

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So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. [Luke 5:7](#)

Sometimes in life, God blesses you with understanding in the looking back. Many years ago, I remember, working in a hot warehouse in the middle of summer in Texas, and wiping my brow in the sleeve of my shirt and thinking “What the heck am I doing here”? Today, as I wiped my brow in the hot summer sun, pulling tape across another box, I remembered that day and I knew.



To learn how to help with hygiene or baby kits go to <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/pda-gift-heart-kits-content-list/>



God was preparing me to work with a great team of people in Juba, South Sudan. That day, long ago, when I had no clue why I was learning to pack boxes efficiently and to tape them securely, that God was preparing me to prepare hygiene and safe motherhood care packages that will be delivered to over 600 women in Pibor, South Sudan.

These packages are prepared by people, like you, in the US to be distributed to people you will probably never know or meet. I can see your faces... I've prepared “few” as part of mission projects across the years through Sunday School, Girl Scouts, women's groups and other groups I have been blessed to be a part of. I remember the laughter, fun and fellowship we shared as we worked together to assemble the gifts we had brought and showing off our contributions as we ohhhed and aaahhed over the cute baby things we had found. But never, in my wildest dreams, did I expect to be a part of distributing those gifts.

Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined myself knowing the people who have been affected by the tragedy that precipitated their need for the project. I couldn't feel

their pain, their agony, their despair, their uncertainty about the future.

Never in my wildest dreams could I have pictured the joy that such a simple gift, to us, can bring to someone who has lost everything, including family, friends, loved ones and home.

An appeal went out to the NGO's (non-government organizations) working in South Sudan for help; more than 600 women, not counting the children that are with them lost, everything in the recent fighting in Pibor, South Sudan. The same fighting that has prevented me from returning to Akobo, and fellow mission co-worker Nancy McGuaghey, who was assigned to Pibor, and also lost everything, from returning to our place of assignment. The appeal went out and one of our partners, IMA World Health, responded by assigning staff – fellow packers – Phillip and Isaac, and recruiting volunteers – me – as I showed up to ask a question, just as they were beginning to pack the boxes .



IMA World Health staff members, Philip and Isaac preparing to pack boxes from Church World Services

“Partnership” is an elusive word that we use frequently in PCUSA World Mission. I know what it means – we work together with the churches, organization and people we serve.

I have read the 2003 General Assembly Policy Statement that says in part, *“The discipline of partnership assumes that mission can best be done by joining hands with those who share a common vision. Partnership in mission involves two or more organizations who agree to submit themselves to a common task or goal, mutually giving and receiving and surrounded by prayer so that God's work can be more faithfully accomplished.”*¹ But what does that *really* mean to you, to me, to the person who recently lost everything in the tornados that have been ravishing our country this spring or to the 600+ women of Pibor County, in Jonglei State, in South Sudan?

Today “partnership” became more than an elusive word. It became real. It is the joy, laughter and fellowship of people working together on a common mission project for people they will probably never know or meet. It is the packages that are assembled and collected in the main warehouse of Church World Services in the USA where more people come together to assemble those packages into boxes that are shipped all over the world and stored in places like IMA World Health in Juba, South Sudan.



“Partnership” is working side by side – a PCUSA Mission Co-Worker who was supposed to be somewhere else today and “National Workers” (native South Sudanese) working in the hot sun to prepare the boxes. “Partnership” is the truck driver who loaded this afternoon and left when the “Plumpy’nut” – a nutritional supplement for the malnourished - didn’t arrive in time, but returned thirty minutes later, when it did arrive, and is waiting until tomorrow to leave so that it could be loaded.

“Partnership” is the South Sudan Ministry of Health working through the indigenous organizations and the county health departments in Upper Nile and Jonglei states to distribute those packages. And, finally, partnership is the women and children who will receive the gift of a simple bar of soap, a hand towel, a comb, toothbrush, and a pair of nail clippers that are packed in each hygiene kit, or the basic necessities to provide care for a baby who is born into the areas with the highest infant mortality rates in the world.

And so, the next time I wipe my brow in the hot sun and wonder “why am I doing this?” or wonder why my flight was delayed because on the “4th day” He said, “Let there be rain”², I will know, God has a plan for each of us, no matter where we are, no matter what we are doing, never in our wildest dreams can we ever know, until that moment we stop to wipe our brow look back.

Peace be with you my friends,

Sharon

¹ <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/global/mission-partnership/>

² Thursday, June 6: Up early and out the door, bags and boxes loaded in the van and we were off to the airport. Once there, I found out where to go and went in. It was a grand reunion as I met some old friends on their way to another place. Grand that is until they dropped the bomb - my flight was cancelled. I didn't want to believe them so I headed for the counter where I am sure three men had watched my disbelief as they laughed when I came up to ask. NO.

They are not flying. YES the flight is canceled. The conversation went something like this...Me: "Are you sure"? them: "Yes, really! We are sure". Me: "When will you fly again" them "In four days from when it stops raining". Me: Are you sure? Them: Yes, maybe four days, maybe next month. It is rainy season." Me: What shall I do. Them: You shall wait.

Monday, June 10: Message from Akobo: “It has been raining since yesterday, as I told you, that I will let you know”

Tuesday, June 11: Message from Juba: “As I told you, they will go there (to Akobo) but it rained yesterday so the flight was cancelled.”

And on the 4th day He said, “let there be rain”....