



**January 2026 - new address: 120 Ratcliffe Drive, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8UB**

Dear Supporter,

Happy New Year. Do please make a note of our new address. Just before Christmas we sent small financial gifts to a few of our South Sudanese friends. By then our fridge was fully stocked and it shook us when we began to receive some thank you messages like this one: "This money has really saved my family. Food has become scarce at home. We had little grain left. We have ground nuts but not much flour. Immediately after receiving the money this afternoon, my wife and daughter were able to procure maize, sugar and oil for us." And this one: "I am in tears of joy for the gift. I had some money but I used it for transport to attend the funeral of my brother's son aged 23 who died after a short illness. I came back on Christmas Eve. Your gift has come at the right time. Pray for us. We are expecting a new baby by the grace of God. Many many thanks for the gift. We will have food in the house." And one more, this time from a Bishop: "I received a money message on my phone and I was thinking who had blessed me with money. I am so happy for this Christmas support. My family will enjoy this Christmas because I was stuck not knowing what to do. But with this blessing, I have become the happiest." These comments are a powerful reminder of how hard life still is for those living in South Sudan where the economy is in a dire state and where life is fragile. Early death from preventable diseases is all too common.

Government employees have not been paid for many months and some NGO workers at the Martha clinic have worked unpaid for the last five months. We can feel powerless to do very much in such a bad situation but this should not mean we can do nothing. What may be a small sum to us could make a very big difference to a family that has nothing left in their larder.

*If you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven't spent the night with a mosquito.*

*-African proverb*

January is a month when there is no school (a bit like our long summer holidays) and so it is the ideal month for the church to run its youth discipleship programmes. This year, we are sponsoring this training in three Dioceses, Yei, Panyana and Morobo. Having moved house recently, we've been clearing out a lot of paper records and as we write this letter, we have in front of us the report on the Panyana Youth Camp of 2011. The leader of that camp is now a Bishop and we think that half the team of young people from



Christ Church, Winchester who joined us are now ordained. That was 15 years' ago and, apart from COVID, the camps have run annually ever since, in some different formats but generally covering the same material – How to be a real disciple of Jesus. We pray that this year's discipleship training will have a life changing impact of all who attend and the leaders too. The photo was taken last year at the Morobo camp.



## Teacher training

Our sponsored students at the Yei Teacher Training College are all doing well and entering their last year of study before graduating in December. This year we are giving scholarships to 8 students (left), who were all selected by their Bishop, and to two students who have been awarded scholarships by the Harriet Memorial Fund. This fund was set up to help female students who have

ability but who would not be able to afford to train as a nurse or teacher without financial support.

## Martha Clinic

The team at Martha are busy exploring a couple of new options for running the clinic. Since its start in 2007, the clinic has imported most of its medicines from Uganda, using a reliable not-for-profit wholesaler that we set up an account with. The Brickworks tops up the account via a bank transfer when needed and the pharmacist at the Martha Clinic sends the next order to Poppy who reviews it and then places the order. We arrange for the medicines to be collected and driven to the border where the medicines are handed over to the driver from the Martha Clinic and are driven to Yei. The logistics and communication can be frustrating but recently the Uganda Revenue Authority made the border crossing and handover very complicated and twice our team has been fined for minor infringements in the documentation. Consequently, we are now looking to find a reliable supplier of wholesale medicines in Juba, which will make the supply somewhat easier.

Meanwhile the Diocese is in discussion with the Christian Blind Mission (CBM) about CBM taking over responsibility for the operation of the Martha Eye Clinic in April. The eye clinic has been funded for the last two years by our church through The Brickworks but this will come to an end in March. The early discussions with CBM have been fruitful and we are hopeful that a new partnership will come to pass, as it seems like a very good fit for the Eye Clinic to be linked to an NGO that is already offering eye services in other parts of South Sudan.

We have previously mentioned our concern that the reduction of US Aid will have a big impact on the health service in South Sudan and on the Martha Clinic in particular. The loss of grant funding is serious and many health staff have not been paid for 5 months. The good news is that another organisation may step in to fund the Martha Clinical Officer and to give support to its children's ward and maternal and child health programmes. This is not yet certain but we are hoping and praying that this help will be given.

Finally, we are very thankful that Poppy is fully recovered and we are able to make plans for a visit to Yei this year, possibly in June. We are also very grateful that our house move went smoothly. On behalf of the Trustees and those we work with in South Sudan, thank you very much for your support.

John and Poppy Spens, now at

The Brickworks, 120 Ratcliffe Drive, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8UB. Tel: 07900 070793.