

Testimonies

If you've been keeping up with our Facebook updates will have read that we have recently had a week in Juba to process our residents permits. Praise God were granted, and we now have permits that last 2 years. This will make it easier for us to return in 2023, willing. During the week in Juba, most of the family sick which forced us to rest. On Sunday morning Ben woke up noticing that his tongue, lips and fingers were swelling and had an angry rash that was quickly spread across his body. He was having an anaphylactic reaction to an unknown cause. We rushed him to the office and requested immediate transport to a hospital. No ambulances in South Sudan.

They started calling taxi companies but no one was available. We sent out an urgent prayer request and within minutes the swelling around Ben's mouth started to subside and the hives cleared up. We cancelled the transport to a hospital which wasn't progressing far anyway. We had a friend still bring us some antihistamines, which Ben took and he continued onto a full recovery. I cannot praise God enough for stepping in and healing Ben's body. This was also a good lesson for the kids. That morning I was doing our bible reading from Matthew 17:14-22. This is the story where Jesus healed a boy with a demon. We spoke about how we need to ask God to heal people because its only by God's power that someone can be healed. We cannot do it on our own accord, like the disciples were trying to do. It was only about 30 minutes later that Ben started having his anaphylactic reaction and Seth kept saying "dad is going to die", while Jonah on the other hand was reassuring him by saying "No, Seth. We just need to keep praying and ask God to use his power to heal Dad". So, they did just this. They kept praying until God healed their Dad. Thankfully they didn't have to wait too long to see God's power move.



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Lightning strikes are very common in South Sudan since it is on the edge of the lightning bowl. It is not uncommon for a few people to be struck by lightning each rainy season. This season alone, we have heard of a house being struck and the debris crushing 2 people to death, a baby being struck and killed and many



other close encounters of lightning strikes. Last Saturday's lightning storm was no exception. We saw a flash and an immediate thunder that shook the ground, walls and windows. Immediately, Jonah began to pray out loud, "dear God, please make it so that lightning didn't hit anyone but if it did please make sure they are okay." We didn't think much of it except, "what a good praying son." However, it turns out that someone was struck by the lightning. There were two young men coming in from their garden to get out of the rain. As they walked under a tree, lightning flowed through the tree and electrocuted them. One of the men was thrown and landed facedown and the other was thrown and landed on his side. A group of people witnessed this and ran to them while calling for help. Their call for help brought some of our church members to this tragic scene. All they could do was pray! One of the men woke up and was paralysed, he had no movement or sensation in his arms and legs. He was disorientated and confused. After the church members prayed for him, the feeling returned to his body and was able to mobilise without disability. The other man was unconscious and not breathing. After the church members prayed for him, he regained consciousness and was also completely healed. Both men came to church for the first time on Sunday and shared this testimony with the body of Christ while praising God. Please pray for these new Christians that their faith will continue to strengthen and blossom.

There was a mad man in the community who was bound by chains in an attempt to control his violence and insanity. A similar report was in our last email, however, this is a different man. We are sharing 2 similar stories! This man was bound by his own family for their own protection and this man was locked in prison on many occasions. However, he was often given the freedom to still roam around Tonj. One church member shared that they saw this man overpower 3 strong men while being bound because he did not want to return to his house like his family were requesting. A month ago, this man came attended one of our church services, bound and out of his mind. We don't know why he came. However, the church gathered around him and prayed for him with no immediate healing. However, on Sunday, a month after the prayer, the man was standing in front of the church, clear of mind and unbound, testifying to the church that Jesus had set him free. Over the month, his family realised that he was no longer having moments of insanity and deemed it safe enough to remove his shackles. Two mad men chained and set free in the last 6 weeks! We cannot help but reflect on the demonic man in the Matthew 8:28-34 who was unsuccessfully bound by chains, was violent and lived in the tombs. Jesus cast the legion of demons into the pigs and set that man free. How awesome is our God! The line from Amazing Grace comes to mind, "My chains are gone. I've been set free. My God, my Saviour has ransomed me. And like a flood His mercy rains. Amazing love. Amazing Grace". It is testimonies like these that give us reason for spreading the good news of the gospel. Please pray for this man that he remains free. Scripture warns us of demons returning at later dates. Please pray that this man's testimony will come with a great harvest. We are already hearing locals ask, "is that really the same man? Can it be?"

In a small village near Mapel there were 3 ladies that had a disagreement with each other. It became so bad that they would no longer greet each other and avoid each other at all costs. They didn't want to have anything to do with each other. Recently a new CHE centre has opened in this village and these ladies started attending the lessons of Community Health Evangelism (CHE). Through these lessons they have heard the gospel message and have come to learn that the way they are treating each other is not how God desires them to act. They have since reconciled with God and with each other and have forgiven each other. They are now happily living together and have brought peace to their families and village. Scripture says that we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. Please pray for all the people in our Tonj villages that their relationship with God will be reconciled through forgiveness, grace and faith. Also, please pray for the relationships that the people have with each other, that brokenness will be restored by the forgiven of Jesus and lead their communities into peace.

While I (Ben) was working in the COVID-19 vaccination clinic in Mount Isa, I was telling a midwife that I had never met before that I was moving to South Sudan for mission work. She recommended that I read a book called "Hospital by the River" which was about some missionaries called the Hamlin's who set up a hospital for maternal fistula patients in Ethiopia. A maternal fistula is when a lady leaks faecal matter and/or urine from damage that occurred during an obstructive labour. These are very embarrassing to the women. We read Hospital by the river and loved it. On our last day in Australia, we were doing our last shop for items that we would need for South Sudan. A book jumped out at us called "A Doctor in Africa". As we read the blurb, we realised that was a book about an Australian Doctor from New South Wales that was trained by the Hamlin Missionaries. We had to read the book! We downloaded the book but listened to it a few weeks later after arriving in Tonj. As we listened to the second last chapter of the book, we learnt how Doctor Andrew Browning wanted to expand and had setup a Fistula hospital in South Sudan. The chapter also mentioned a way to use placentas for biogas to run hospital. Sarah emailed Doctor Andrew Browning to find out the company that delivers this technology. It turns out that it wasn't what we thought, however, Doctor Andrew offered something better, to work with us to fly Tonj women to Juba for fistula surgeries. We didn't know of any, but we thought we would try our and advertise it anyway. We were blown away when 11 women came forward! They have been flown to Juba this week to receive their changing surgery and another 2 ladies came to us after this group left. We are blown away by all the little things that God has done on our journey, starting in Australia and continuing all the way to Tonj, to help these ladies. Please commit these ladies and the entire fistula camp to your prayers. Some of these ladies have never left their villages before, let alone gone on a plane to "the big city". We cannot wait to see the change in these ladies when they return to Tonj in a few weeks.



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Since we have been unable to return to Australia due to the COVID restrictions we have been remaining faithful that God will make a way for us to return home. Ben has been able to extend his leave at half pay until the end of January, so it has always been in the back of our mind to want to be home for Ben to return to work before his leave ends. We have been keeping an eye on flights and ideally wanted to get a direct flight from Los Angeles to Brisbane without any layovers. We have been unsuccessful in finding these flights until I just happened to check for flights on Sunday morning. We couldn't believe our eyes, there were direct flights into Brisbane, and best of all they had classic reward flights on offer. Each ticket came to 41900 frequent flyer points. So, with the help of family, we were able to get together the 209500 points we needed. We only had to pay \$675.50 for taxes and booking fees. And since we will be arriving into Queensland after the 17th of December we won't have to hotel quarantine. This has saved us close to \$20,000. If we didn't wait on God and tried to get home on our own accord, we would have unnecessarily spent this money just to get home. By the time we get home, finish quarantine, spend some time with family and head home to Mount Isa, it will be about the same time Ben's leave ends and needs to be back at work. What an awesome God we serve!

Prayer requests

Let me start off with some context that some of you may not be aware of. It is culturally customary in South Sudan for a marriage to be arranged with a dowry. And that dowry comes in the form of cows. The number of cows you have contributes to how wealthy you are, and women can be seen as a form of way to obtain this wealth. Essentially a woman is sold for cows when it comes to marriage.... even if they are marrying for love. I have had many conversations with women who have been forced into a marriage they don't want to be in, simply because their father wanted the cows. It is soul crushing hearing these things are happening

to the women here. A few weeks ago, a young girl from our church was being sold into marriage by her father and grandfather to a witch doctor simply because he could provide a large number of cows for her. This young girl and her mother are strong believers and are quite involved in the church. The custom for a "wedding ceremony" here is basically have an auction and many of the men in the family will contribute their two cents as they are also going to benefit from the number of cows received. While this auction was happening the mother of the young girl stood up to these men and said she refused for her daughter to be sold to a witch doctor as it goes against everything, she believes in. This confrontation enraged the grandfather (her father-in-law) and he shot her in the back. Thank God she survived and is now recovering in the government hospital. I praise God for the strength of this mother to stand up for her faith. Many times, this does not happen, and young girls are forced into a marriage they do not want. Forced marriage is illegal in South Sudan but is not enforced. Please join us in praying for the recovery of this mother and daughter.

As you may or Sudan. This is



may have not known, there has been a lot of civil war in South one of the reasons that it is considered as the third most dangerous country in the world. They have had a 20+ year civil war in the 80s. Much of this war was between Arabic Muslims and Christians/animists. In 2011, South Sudan became an independent nation. The Arabic Muslims took Sudan, and the Christians/Animists took South Sudan. However, in 2013 another civil war broke out which only resolved over the last few years. War and conflict have been a huge part of these peoples lives. Even now, we have heard of stories of battles between Tonj North and Tonj East over cattle raids. These fights stem from poverty, stealing and retaliation. At least 50 people have died in this battling so far. Please pray for the peace of South Sudan. Jesus' message of forgiveness, love, gentleness and healing is a message that this nation desperately needs.