

FULAA Newsline



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FULAA LIFELINE INTERNATIONAL

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General Update

The Evangelical Free Church of Sudan (EFCS) and Cornerstone Children's Home organized a dynamic and spirited Easter Weekend, starting with overnight prayers on Good Friday and culminating in a lively church service and evening celebration on Easter Sunday. On Good Friday the EFCS invited pastors and youth choirs from various churches throughout Nimule, South Sudan. Approximately 150 people attended the all-night service, which included prayers, song presentations, sermons, and dramas. It was an unforgettable occasion and every participant departed in the morning with renewed hearts (even if their eyes and limbs were a bit exhausted).

On Easter Sunday Assistant Pastor John Siboni encouraged the EFCS congregation to accept Jesus Christ into their lives and share in his

resurrection. The EFCS youth choir and the Sunday School choir presented special songs to celebrate the joy of Easter. Later in the day, the director of Fulaa, Pastor Samuel Juma, arrived in Nimule for a surprise visit to the EFCS and Cornerstone. He joined the Cornerstone Kids and members of the church for a big supper of Nile Perch, cabbage, and Coca-Cola. Easter wrapped up with a prayer service and celebration in the evening. Pastor Samuel thanked everyone for welcoming him and urged them to remember God's enduring love and boundless mercy as this wonderful weekend came to a bittersweet end.

The new year has ushered in a great deal of new activities at the EFCS and Cornerstone. In January Cornerstone received Sophie Beya, a missionary from Crossroads

Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Sophie will be working with the Cornerstone Kids for the whole of this year, acting as a mother, counselor, teacher --- you name it and she's probably doing it! She is currently conducting weekly Bible studies with the teenagers, and has even begun to teach kindergarten classes for the young boys and girls. She didn't want to limit the classes to only Cornerstone Kids so she's opened the door to children from the surrounding community. Right now there are 16 Cornerstone *Kindergarten Caterpillars* in Mama Sophie's class!

On March 1st the EFCS organized a baptism ceremony at the Nile River. Six people were baptized by the EFCS Senior Pastor Juma John, including three of the orphans, two regular church

What We Need

Presently, Cornerstone Children's Home is undergoing some serious financial hardships. Due to limited funds, Cornerstone has had to reduce its workforce as well as alter the children's diet, removing expensive foods like beef from the weekly menu. Please consider giving toward the children's food and

education, so that we may continue to provide excellent care for the needy and orphaned kids of South Sudan. The costs of operating Cornerstone amount to \$3000 each month, so if 300 people donate just \$10 each month then the program will meet the needs of the 44 kids who

now reside at Cornerstone (as well as the 16 kids who attend the weekend program).

The EFCS and Cornerstone have been experiencing other problems aside from financial difficulties. In March a powerful storm tore two solar panels off the roof of the church. The two panels that weren't

Inside this issue:

ROSS KELLY'S TESTIMONY	2
MEET BEATRICE	3
GENERAL UPDATE, CONTINUED	3
WHAT WE NEED, CONTINUED	4

Continued on page 3

Continued on page 4

Ross Kelly's Testimony

The journey of my spirit has been a painfully slow experience. Still I've covered a great expanse of spiritual terrain in the past few years, and if I could measure the distances I've crossed then I'm certain the long miles of the soul would far outnumber the physical miles between my old home in Kansas and my second home in South Sudan. So what impeded my progress toward realizing that Jesus was there in my every step and every breath? Fear, doubt, and everything in between! I was afraid to admit that most (if not all) of the actions, deeds, ideas, and expressions that constituted my adult life were based on satisfying my own desires, and not the will of God. And my beloved independence (which was, in reality, an ignorant separation from God) felt threatened by the whole concept of Christianity, which asks us to offer our entire lives to the endeavors of an unseen presence. So my ego was the poison at the root of my spiritual growth, but it was not the only *substance* hindering my soul from finding a final home. I was stopped in my tracks by my adherence to Logic rather than Belief; I was forced into a holding pattern by my aversion toward the sin-

ister forms of Christianity that plague the American landscape; and I was even blinded by my own diaphanous hope that it was enough to gaze at the starry kingdoms in the night sky and contemplate the intricate designs within the human body and conclude that *something* created all this.

During my time among the people of South Sudan, I began to submit myself to the change that was naturally taking place in deepest regions of my mind and spirit. Part of me wanted to resist this internal revolution, but I couldn't turn away. I saw the kids possessed these amazing and completely *illogical* hearts. How could so much faith in God and Christ fill up spirits that had been stripped of so much? Why weren't these kids broken beyond repair after the deaths of their parents? I saw Belief breaking the constraints of Logic.

Though the church in Sudan is far from perfect, I saw that her members were struggling (in the wake of two decades of civil war) to practice a Christ-centered form of service and worship that differs radically from the ventriloquist ministries that try to speak dead ideas and dead prayers through the

Son of Man.

In the Scriptures themselves I began to see a God who was more than simply a Creator. I discovered a Lord who wanted his creations to know him intimately and for all time, to let go of their *healthy* independence and receive what C.S. Lewis called "the good infection." All of these shifts brought me to the morning where I stood on a rocky bank of the Nile River, taking in the flow of the water, the heat of the Equatorial sun, and the rise and fall of the hymns being sung by the *irrational* kids whom God had entrusted into my care. I wanted the children to witness my confession of faith, partly because they were so intertwined in the story that culminated on this day (and partly because I love them dearly). Within their hearts I saw the hopeful flames that were ignited by the Lord who is both mediator and judge, savior and consuming fire. I stepped into the water and was baptized, and at first I felt almost no emotion. I heard the sound of the ancient current and the felt the blood of my own heart and wondered what exactly had happened .

I thought I would feel joy or some spark within myself, and these preconceptions nearly drove me to despondency in the hours following the ceremony. Yet as the days made their unchangeable approach to Easter, I started to experience a calm and increasing determination to live for Christ. I know I still have ground to cover and challenges to face, but I also know I'm out of the swamp and walking the narrow path. To borrow from the book of Hebrews, I'm aware of (and alive in) the fact that I'm now passing beyond the city gate, that I'm now moving to the very edges of the camp where the bodies of the animal sacrifices were burned and where Jesus also suffered, making us holy through the shedding of his own blood. "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come."



Meet Beatrice, The Newest Cornerstone Kid!

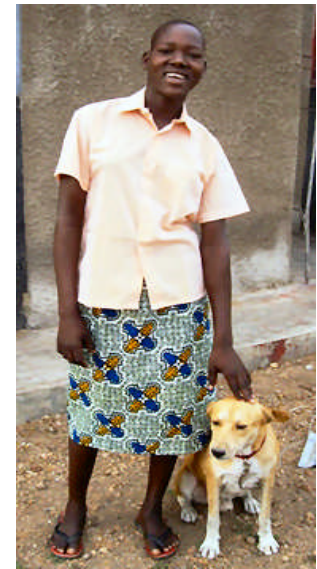
Beatrice Utua was born into a world torn apart by war. Her parents, Martin and Lucia, fled from South Sudan in the early nineties, escaping the deadly attacks by the Arab forces of Northern Sudan. The young couple settled in the Uluwa Refugee Camp in Uganda, and Lucia gave birth to Beatrice in 1993. Sadly, life in the camp was almost as dangerous as life in their war ravaged homeland. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a vicious Ugandan rebel force, routinely pillaged the camps of Northern Uganda, killing, raping, and abducting the innocent residents.

In 2000, when Beatrice was only seven years old, the LRA raided the Uluwa Camp, capturing her father and later murdering him. Her mother never recovered from his death, and she grew increasingly ill over the course of the next two years. She died from a heart complication in 2002, leaving Beatrice in the care of her neighbor, Godi.

One year later, Godi, his wife, his six children, and Beatrice moved away, because the LRA continued to target their camp. They resettled in Alere, another camp in Uganda, and for the next five years Beatrice's life was relatively peaceful, but far from easy. Godi showed little love toward Beatrice, choosing to treat her as a servant. She was always the child who was given the heavy work, while Godi's own children were told to do the simple chores. Though Godi never raised a hand toward his own kids, he didn't hesitate to cane Beatrice.

In early 2008, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) began repatriating exiled Sudanese. South Sudan has been at peace since 2005 (although conflict still rages in the Darfur region of Western Sudan), and the UNHCR decided the time had come to help refugees return. What this development meant for Beatrice was clear-cut, yet utterly startling: she was now on the verge of traveling to a homeland that she'd never seen. But she didn't want to remain in the care of Godi, who had registered his family for the repatriation effort in early February of this year. At first Beatrice accepted to move with Godi's family, but after reaching the first UNHCR waystation in South Sudan she refused to go any further. A representative from the UNHCR learned of her situation and came to Cornerstone Children's Home, requesting Pastor Felix Santos and Ross Kelly to assist in the matter. Santos and Kelly traveled to the waystation on the outskirts of Nimule and met a scared, confused, and extremely stubborn 15 year old girl. The Cornerstone administrators conducted a thorough investigation into Beatrice's circumstances, and then decided to accept her into the home.

Over the next few days Beatrice began to experience the kind of love and care that she hadn't felt since the loss of her parents. She saw that all



the kids at Cornerstone (including herself) were treated with equal love and equal discipline. She saw there were numerous activities for her to join (from Bible Studies to morning prayers to the church choir). She realized that God was going to take care of her, and this revelation changed her whole demeanor. The solemn young woman that was found at the waystation slowly transformed into a joyous spirit, embracing the Cornerstone family as if her new brothers and sisters had been with her from the start. Today Beatrice is attending Primary 6 at the local school, giving memory verses during morning devotion, singing in the youth choir, and acting as a positive example to her younger sisters. She is Cornerstone's newest blessing!

General Update, Continued

members, and one of Cornerstone's team leaders, Ross Kelly, who has been working in South Sudan for the past two and half years. (See the previous page for Ross' Testimony.) The Cornerstone Kids along with several members of the church witnessed the ceremony and sang songs of praise as each believer entered the water to be baptized.

Later in March, Pastor Juma John delivered support for our four seminary students who are now in their second year at All Nations Theological College and Seminary in Kampala, Uganda. The students were grateful for the assistance and encouragement from Fulaa. The support will cover the costs of tuition, room and board, stationary, medical assistance, and transport. In the January

Fulaa Newline we requested aid for these students and you, the Friends of Fulaa, responded in a big way to ensure that these students will remain in college. Let us continue to pray for the completion of their pastoral training, so they may bring their knowledge and faith back to the people of South Sudan!

We continue to work on the Fulaa website, and you can now donate to Fulaa using Paypal on the website! You do not need to have a Paypal account. This donation system will allow you to pay by major credit card or by electronic check. Thank you for your financial support!

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Samuel Juma,
Director

What We Need, Cont'd

ripped away received serious damage. Now that the solar power is no longer functioning, the Cornerstone Kids have no electric light at night for studies, prayers, and other family activities (like movie night). Moreover, there are no security lights to deter intruders from entering the compound. To make matters worse, there is presently no "town power" in Nimule. The EFCS and Cornerstone have a gas generator, but due to the high prices of gas (roughly \$7 per gallon) the generator is seldom used, except on Sundays to run the sound system for the prayer service. Please consider helping to bring power and light back to the EFCS and Cornerstone. One solar panel costs \$600 (and we need four new ones), but any support you can offer will be greatly appreciated.

One of our greatest needs at the EFCS and Cornerstone is to find more dedicated people to become a part of the children's lives. We dream of forming a multinational group of volunteers and personnel who are willing to give their hearts and

minds to our program. We desperately need trained caretakers and counselors to get involved in our home. We need missionaries who can work on the ground in Nimule as well as volunteers who can work from their home countries, contributing their skills and talents to strengthening our program. Please consider joining the Fulaa Team. Contact Samuel Juma (samuel.juma@gmail.com or 703-342-2313) for more information about the opportunities offered by Fulaa Lifeline International.

We are also in need of people who are willing to make a financial sacrifice so that our new home may be finished. We will restart work on the children's house later this year, but we will need \$200,000 to complete the construction, furnish the rooms, and build a separate bathroom facility. If 200 people each donate \$1000, then we will be able see the doors of the home opened later this year.

Our current huts for the children are inadequate and difficult to maintain. The children sleep on mattresses that are spread on the floors of the huts. One pressing need is for bunk beds, which would help to improve the children's living conditions as they await the completion of their house.

Another serious concern is that many of the children's foam mattresses have begun to deteriorate along with their blankets. \$100 will purchase one bunk bed, \$30 will purchase one mattress, and \$10 will purchase one set of blankets.

You could make a financial donation to our programs or you could make a donation of your time and skills. More than anything else, we need your prayers for God is the only one who has the power to help the suffering people of South Sudan.

