



CLIM
CONNECTING
LIVES International Mission

Healing Workshop
Southern Sudan
Spring 2013

A Letter from Fran Boyle

It was a real blessing to be able to return to Western Equatoria in South Sudan. Though I would miss seeing our children up in Western Aweil, I had not been to this area in the far southwest area of S. Sudan for ten years and had missed the people there that I had come to love years before.

I knew it had to be God calling us there when things fell into place so easily. It began with a nudge to take Trauma Healing training in October. A new bishop that I knew as a young priest in Yambio visited me in November. Bishop Samuel was in Washington as a representative of Western Equatoria at a conference on the LRA problem. The Lord's Resistance Army has devastated a wide area near the Congo border of Sudan, inside Congo, Uganda, and the Central African Republic. Funded by Bashir and his radical regime in Khartoum, the brutal group has not only killed, destroyed, and stolen property, but have taken many hostages including young children. Bishop spoke to me of the need for trauma healing for the many affected people in his area. He asked if I could bring a team to do a healing workshop in the near future.

When Scott Thompson said yes so quickly when I asked if he could join me, I knew that it was meant to be. Not only could Scott come, but old friends from Yambio in the same region of S. Sudan agreed that they would be able to help us with the workshop through translation and prayer ministry.

The area which had been particularly affected was an area called Sakure on the border with Congo. It is in Nzara Diocese, the Diocese of Bishop Samuel. There have been no recent attacks in the area thanks to help from the Ugandan army and the SPLA of S. Sudan and people are beginning to return to their homes. The last attack was about eighteen months ago. No one from the outside had been in to minister to



Western Aweil

Yambio

the people there since the onset of the attacks around four years ago. The Bishop made a pastoral visit last year, riding in an armored tank of the Ugandan military, with military soldiers before and behind him.

We witnessed some of the destruction on the way in as we rode for several hours on very rough bumpy roads. The Bishop pointed out homes, a clinic and two churches that had been burned by the LRA. He referred to one church which was burned and said that the wife of the priest was taken hostage along with her pregnant daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law was eventually released, but the wife of the priest was killed. Her remains were found by the Ugandan army and returned to the priest.

As we approached the church where we were to meet, we were greeted on the roadside, by people waving palm branches and singing songs of welcome.

Two hundred people crowded into the open air church with a thatch roof. Outside were new graves, a vivid reminder of the number of church members who had died in the LRA attacks. Some graves contained several bodies, we were told, as often there was not time to dig another grave.



Graves in church yard

The stories of abductions, limbs cut off, of people burned in their homes, women taken into slavery, were all more than we could bear but we had to rely completely on the Lord to lead and to bear the burdens. Some of the men and women had managed to escape. They were quick also to want to discuss their stories of miracles and the Lord's faithfulness in the midst of the chaos.

The workshop, built upon biblical principles, was designed to walk people through their trauma by telling their stories, exploring the question of "Where was God?" during their suffering, and the stages of grief. It also contains an exercise of acknowledging our pain and taking it to the cross, followed by working through forgiveness.

Testimonies at the end of our time together in the workshop showed that indeed many of their burdens were laid down in the time that we had with the group. It showed on many of their faces. Several leaders spoke of the anger and weight of burdens that they had felt before we began, but that they felt lighter as they had given much of it over to the Lord.



Telling stories of trauma

We gave the attendees opportunities to share before the entire group. Telling their stories was an important part of their healing. We could see the deep grief and burdens that the leaders in particular were carrying. The priest in charge at the church where we were meeting had stayed through all of the attacks (instead of fleeing the area as many had done) and had tried to minister to his flock. After our session on the stages of grief, the pastor asked for prayer for the anger and pain he was carrying. We were pleased that he reached out. His whole demeanor changed as he gave his anger and grief over to the Lord.

The medic of the area clinic was clearly traumatized. He brought up one man that he had saved. The man had major scarring on his neck where the LRA had tried to cut off his head with a panga (like a machete). The medic had saved many lives but still grieved those that he could not.



Fran facilitating

It was clear that our time with the people in Sakure had made a difference. Just the fact that someone from the outside cared and had come in to listen to them was healing, I believe. The workshop helped them to see things from God's perspective and helped them to give it over to Him. They had been very deliberate in the exercise of taking their pain to the cross. They spent time at the foot of a physical cross as they contemplated the profound reality of the cross.

The Bishop asked us to come back for a follow up trip before the end of the year. I am sure that the Lord will work all of that out as well.



Taking their pain to the cross



Exercise on unforgiveness



Burning their burdens



Group gathered for healing workshop - Fran in the middle, Scott on the far right

Back in Nzara, the Diocesan headquarters, we accompanied the Bishop on his stops at Diocesan meetings going in Archdeaconries. In each place we brought greetings and listened to an overview of the work of this area of the church. One place we visited was Rangu, a place I had visited twelve years ago with a group of evangelists traveling on bikes through the jungle. I will never forget the visit. Many of the people in the church were running to witchdoctors for healing and consequently wound up oppressed by demons. The evangelists and I wound up ministering deliverance to many people that day, working late into the evening. We rode through the jungle arriving back at midnight. I grieved that the church members did not know our Lord to be the mighty healing God that he is.

We arrived at the church in Rangu to find that there had been a storm that had swept across the area. The wind from the storm blew half of the thatch roof off the church and caused the structure beneath to collapse. A fourteen year old girl who was in a confirmation class meeting in the church at the time was killed. We brought our condolences, but the heaviness of grief and hopelessness was palpable.

We visited with two other Bishops, the Bishop Justin of Maridi and the Bishop John of Ezo. I had worked with both of these men when they were young priests and it was fantastic to see the wonderful men of God that they have grown into. John and his family, as well as his flock in his diocese, have also suffered from LRA attacks. Scott and I could feel the immense weight of the burdens that John was carrying. It was a privilege for us to pray for him and his diocese. John also extended an invitation to us to return with a team to minister in his diocese.

Clearly the need for healing from the wounds of trauma is enormous, not only in Western Equatoria, but also in our area in Western Aweil where we care for orphaned children that have suffered the violent loss of parents and then suffered in slavery.

Please join us in praying that God will raise up more people to join us there. Thank you to all of you who have helped to make it possible by your giving and prayer support. Please consider what you can do to help us fund the work that the Lord has called us to do going forward.

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Francis of Assisi

Funds are needed to provide:

- Additional Healing Workshops
- New latrines in our school. The previous ones collapsed in the heavy rains.
- Tuition for our Sudanese students studying in Kenya
- All of the ongoing costs of medicines for the clinic and the school.

We thank you for your continued prayers and caring!

Because of God working through you, we are making a difference!

Tax deductible checks for any of the projects and for Fran's ministry support may be made out to "YES" (Yielded Evangelical Servants). **DO NOT** put Fran's name on the check! Please send checks to Fran, rather than YES, so that she can make sure that donations are properly credited to her account. You can also make a donation via credit card by going to our website: www.connectinglivesintl.org.

Mail to: **Fran Boyle, 4103 Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003**

Questions? Call Fran at 703-642-5135 or email her (fran@connectinglivesintl.org)

If you would like to receive newsletters via email, contact Wendy Habicht at wendy@connectinglivesintl.org to be added to our email list. Thank you!