

Ethnic Reconciliation for South Sudanese Refugees

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Warring political and ethnic factions are continuing to fight in South Sudan. In neighbouring Gambella (Ethiopia), refugees continue to arrive from across the border fleeing from war.

Bishop Grant LeMarquand writes: *“I just got back from a new refugee camp near the town of Dimma. I met on Saturday afternoon with leaders of the new Anglican Church in the camp. As their bishop I was asked to provide a name for the church. Reflecting on their need to find a place of refuge I named them ‘Holy Family’ and explained to them that Jesus understood what they were going through since he was himself a refugee in Egypt.*

They are receiving adequate food and shelter from the UN and the WFP (World Food Program). They had three requests (aside from asking me to baptize about 70 people and license some lay readers!) – they have tukals (huts) to sleep in, but no place for a community shelter for worship, or other meetings such as a place to teach their children (it will be some time before a school is set up). They also need Bibles in various languages and clothes. They had to leave their homes in Sudan in a hurry and many literally had to flee with the clothes on their back.

*I had about \$150 with me and spent it all in the Dimma market buying what clothes I could. The priest from **Dimma** came back to Gambella with me and my plan is to provide him with a couple of thousand dollars to buy clothes to give to Holy Family Anglican Church.*

On Monday morning I led worship at the camp. I was told that there were about 600 members but 800 turned up. We started at 7.30 am, so that we could worship in the coolest part of the day. We kept it really short (2 and a half hours) since we had a lot of baptisms. We also had the Eucharist which many had not had in a while.

I caught a glimpse of the kingdom at this service – although a large part of the fighting in South Sudan is ethnically-based violence, this church had made a decision. They would worship together in spite of ethnic and language differences – so we sang and prayed in Anuak, Nuer, Dinka and Murle (my 10 minute sermon had to be translated into 3 of those languages which made it at least 45 minutes...). I was so grateful to be able to experience this inter-ethnic worship – kind of an ‘in your face’ to the devil I think.”

Thank you to our partners who responded to our **appeal** to respond to the urgent needs in Gambella. We are grateful for your partnership in the gospel.

