



Newsletter

Gambella, Ethiopia.

October 15, 2015

New Region, New People, New Culture - One Faith.



Greetings.

Allow me to thank you brethren for accepting to be part of this mission. I arrived in Gambella, Ethiopia on 29th August this year and have been serving The Lord here since then. I am writing this report to try to shed some light about the people, the region, and the work I am involved in here in Gambella. This way, you will be aware of what is going on with the Lord's Church on this other side of the World.

The Region

Gambella is one of the nine ethnically based states that make Ethiopia. Gambella is at the border of South-Sudan and Ethiopia. This state was once part of the former Sudan. The original inhabitants were a Nilotic ethnic group known as Anuaks or Anyuaks. Eventually thousands of refugees from South-Sudan have flooded the State and with the refugees came foreign organizations and Christian groups.

The national language of Ethiopia is Amharic. Am told Amharic is as old as the Hebrew language. Unlike most other African countries, Ethiopia has maintained most of her traditions and most of all her traditional language and culture. Ethiopia is one of the few African countries that were never colonized after fighting and defeating the Italian and Britons in two back to back military and civilian battles.

The People

There are mainly three "kinds" of people who live in Gambella - the Nuer, the Anuaks, and the 'Highlands'. They seem to co-exist peacefully to the eyes of a stranger, but until you draw closer, then you realize that they act different, speak different, look different, and are always suspicious of one another.

The Nuer:

Basically, these are South Sudanese. There are a few "South Sudanese" who are Ethiopian citizens because Gambella region is said to have been formerly part of the larger Sudan before Ethiopia annexed it. Majority of the Nuer people in Gambella though are refugees who have in one way or the other managed to escape from the war-torn South-Sudan in one piece.

To help you glimpse a picture of the Nuer people, I humbly asked my brother in Christ Khor Wal to allow me use his photography in this Newsletter. Brother Khor is the coordinator of all mission work in all refugee camps in Gambella. Brother Khor gives you an exact image of an



adult elder in a South-Sudan clan. Through him, I have been able to teach the Gospel in Tierdiki refugee camp.

The Nuer people are easily distinguished by the tattoos they have on their faces. Adult men have straight lines tattooed across their faces while women (not all of them though),

have dots in parts or sometimes all over their face. Am told a Nuer can read so much information from the structure of lines and dots on another Nuer's face but as for me all I see are wonderful facial decorations.

On average the Nuer are very tall and athletic people in comparison to average Anuaks and the 'Highlands'. Boys and girls as young as ten years are much taller than majority of adult Ethiopians. They speak Nuer, English, and many speak Amharic.

The Anuak

Majority of the Anuaks are Ethiopia citizens and only a few are refugees from South-Sudan. Though citizens of Ethiopia and free to settle anywhere in Ethiopia, almost 98% of this community live in Gambella. They speak Anuak and Amharic with a very small number of

them speaking English.

The Anuaks have no much friendship with the Nuer people. There exists a deep feeling in them that the Nuer people should be repatriated back to South-Sudan as soon as yesterday. They claim that the huge number of refugees in Gambella has only made life too expensive for the common citizen. They say food prices, rent, and other basic life amenities have become expensive because of the current high population caused by the continuous inflow of refugees. Due to such and many other grievances, the Anuaks and the Nuer have fought each other sometimes resulting to some Anuaks becoming refugees themselves and fleeing to Neighboring countries like Kenya.

The Anuaks are generally shorter than the Nuer people but are physically more strongly built. The Anuaks also have no cultural tattoos on their faces.

The Anuaks live what I would call communal lives. They eat in groups, work in groups, and build their houses under one fence. Agemates will be seen walking in groups and when it's time to take a 'shower' they will all stream to the bank of the river and take a bath. Along the river, you will find multitudes of men, women, and children bathing "dress less".

The 'Highlands'

These are all Ethiopia citizens who are from outside the state of Gambella. They are nicknamed 'the highlands' because most of Ethiopia except Gambella is very mountainous. Probably you have read or heard of the fertile Ethiopian highlands.

On average 'the highlands' are shot, stout, and light skinned with an exception of some like the Tigray community. They make most of the government and control the economy and politics of this country. They speak Amharic with a few speaking English.

Foreigners

Gambella State and especially the city of Gambella has many foreigners due to the many Non-governmental organizations that have camped here because of the refugee crisis. There are also several Christian groups that have pitched camp in this region.

A Brief History of My Mission

On one lonely long night in Morgantown, WV, I picked up my phone and tried to call anyone to tell them how disturbed I was. There were about two hundred contacts in my phone directory but the only one that came to my mind was that of one of the elders at the Morgantown Church of Christ. I had been fellowshipping with this congregation from the year 2009 when I joined WVU. On this one long night, I was thinking of how more I could be of use to the Lord's Church. Some inner voice was telling me that I was already doing enough but some other voice deep in me said I was capable of doing even more. I then started thinking about my people back home and wondered when they would ever know The Truth. Who would ever teach them the True Gospel if I don't? Very sleepless, disturbed, and tormented, I sent a short text message to Charlie Morris - the elder who taught me the Gospel and baptized

me at the Morgantown Church of Christ. I just said, "Charlie, I want to be a Preacher". I switched off my phone and miraculously slept off.

So much happened from this text message and eventually I joined Sunset International Bible Institute for a Bachelor degree in biblical studies. On the morning of orientation at Sunset, I was asked to say what I would like to do after graduation. I said I will return back home in Africa and preach the Gospel.

After two years of intensive bible study at Sunset International Bible Institute, my graduation day came. I graduated at the same time with my classmate David, and we both returned back to our respective countries to preach The Word. I returned to my hometown, Meru, Kenya. David returned to Gambella, Ethiopia to work at the Sudanese Preaching School in Gambella.

Once in Kenya, I went straight to my home village and begun studying the bible with friends and former classmates and eventually planted a Congregation at a little village known as Machegene. The Machegene congregation had reached a Sunday service attendance of forty one adults and I had baptized fourteen of them. I was already holding bible studies with another group in another town known as Makutano when it was agreed that an internship opportunity would help me serve the Lord even better in Meru, Kenya.

Through the intervention of Truitt Addair, President Sunset International Bible Institute, brother Tyrone Mynhier, who heads the Sudanese Mission in Ethiopia agreed to have me do an internship program with his team here in Gambella. I took this as a pure blessing and a big boost to my young mission work. With this internship I believed God had opened an opportunity for me to practically work in the company of established missionaries who I could learn a lot from.

Having arrived in Gambella on 29th August, I have since preached to three different congregations and one congregation in a refugee camp known as Tierkidi or Kule one. I have taught several bible studies in different villages and refugee camps and thirteen Souls have believed and been baptized into Christ. Glory be to God.



Once done with the internship, I hope to return back to Meru, Kenya and continue evangelizing the people of Meru with the aim of planting congregations that can fully support themselves within a short period of time.

My Schedule

August 29, 2015 - November 26, 2015

- 1) Preach the Word in nearby congregations in Gambella.

- 2) Arrange and participate in village bible studies with the team of preachers assigned to me by Brother Tyrone Mynhier.
- 3) Teach the Gospel to the South-Sudanese in refugee camps when given a chance.



- 4) Baptize the believers into His name.
- 5) Mature the Saints in Gambella, Ethiopia.

November 28, 2015 - January 9, 2016.

- 1) Travel home (Kenya) to renew my immigration status as required by Ethiopia immigration laws. (I am required to step out of the country and renew my status after every three months).
- 2) Hold a series of bible studies with the people of Makutano, Meru with an aim of planting a congregation in September/October 2016.
- 3) Baptize believers into His name.

January 10, 2016 - April 8, 2016

- 1) Return to serve with the Gambella Mission.
- 2) Teach the Gospel
- 3) Preach the Word
- 4) Baptize believers into His name.



April 9, 2016 - May 10, 2016

- 1) Travel home (Kenya) to renew my immigration status as required by Ethiopia immigration law.
- 2) Hold a series of bible studies with the people of Makutano, Meru with an aim of planting a

congregation in September/October 2016.

- 3) Baptize believers into His name.

May 10, 2016 - September 4, 2016

- 1) Serve in Gambella mission
- 2) Instruct at The Gambella South-Sudanese Preaching School
- 3) Complete my internship

September 5th, 2016

- 1) Return home for full-time Ministry.
- 2) Plant a congregation at Makutano, Meru.

Prayer Request

Prayers are needed for the young Christians in the refugee camps to hold on to The Faith despite the trials and difficult situation they are in. Help us pray also that peace returns to

South-Sudan so that this human calamity may come to an end once and for all.



Future plan

- 1) Return to Meru, Kenya for full time mission work.**
- 2) Plant a congregation at Makutano, Meru.**
- 3) Conduct bible studies with different individuals and families at different villages and towns across Meru County with an aim of planting more cocongregations.**

Here are a few photos from recent works at two different refugee camps.





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Sincerely,

**Geoffrey,
Servant of The Lord,
Gambella, Ethiopia.**

