



MISSION CONNECTIONS

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Stepping Out in Faith

Sharon Kandel
*Mission co-worker
 serving in the Horn of
 Africa*

Dear friends,

I am always so blessed each time I visit partners in the Horn of Africa. On my last trip in Oct/Nov 2023, I was struck by the way each partner is stepping out in faith in different, and yet similar ways.

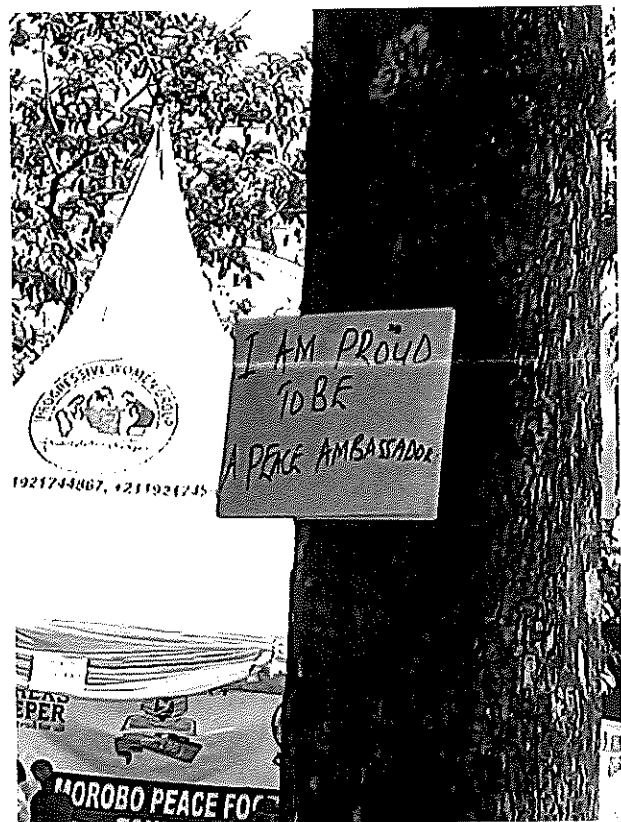
My first stop was in Ethiopia. I had the opportunity to visit the town of Mizan Teferi and meet Rev. Tatek Kifle, the new president of the South West Bethel Synod. I was also able to meet Rev. Azenebe Desseno the president of a NEW synod, South West Ethiopia Bethel Synod. I was not able to make it to Tepi where the synod offices are, but representatives of the synod came to meet me. The Bethel synods in Ethiopia grew by two new synods in 2023. Stepping out in faith. They do not have much in the way of buildings, cars, or material things, but they do have FAITH and they are stepping out in faith that God will provide what they need.

New synods are created when a current synod has planted so many congregations and their area has grown so much that it is difficult for the synod to minister to all those people. So, a new synod is formed and has to pass the criteria set by the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. It takes a lot of work to get a new synod approved but, by stepping out in faith that God will go before them, the church gets it done.

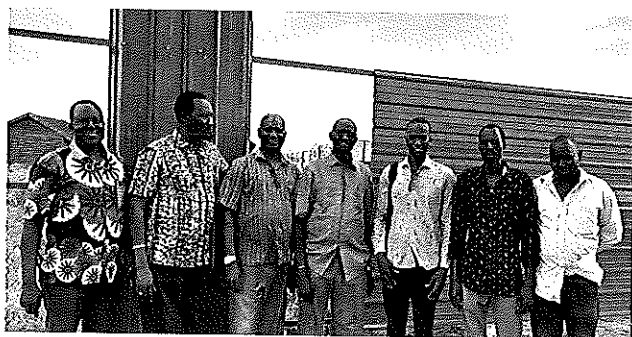
I went on to South Sudan to join our partner, RECONCILE, in celebrating 20 years of faithful work. RECONCILE was created by people stepping out in faith and saying that God wants us to do the work of reconciliation, peace, and trauma

healing in South Sudan. What a celebration it was to see the fruits of so much work! Just the fact that we could be in Yei to celebrate was evidence of the work that RECONCILE has done. This area was not safe for many years but, through the hard work of so many at RECONCILE, people are returning to this area where there is a new sense of hope, peace, and maybe, a return to normal.

While in Juba I was also able to meet with Dr. Aida Weran, from Khartoum, Sudan. She fled Khartoum when the war started last year and has now become a refugee in South Sudan. It was a real step of faith for her family to make the trip from their home to an unknown place along a road that was not secure. Those steps of faith brought them to Juba where Dr. Aida has been able to find some work teaching and translating and where she daily steps out in faith that her family's needs will be met.



Sign at the RECONCILE celebration



Rev. Peter Yien, Rev. Tut Koang, Rev. Dominik, Rev. Thomas Tut, Rev. Alphonse, and the contractors at the site of Juba Evangelical Bible School

Rev. Alphonse stepped out in faith to start a new Bible School – Juba Evangelical Bible School (JEBS). The South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC) felt there was a real need for a Bible school for students who did not have a high school diploma but showed a calling to become leaders in the church. So, in faith, land was bought for the school. I was able to visit the site, pray over the school, students, and leadership, and see God's hand at work as these faithful servants stepped out in faith. It is exciting to know that all the applicants passed the entrance exam and are now in class. For now, JEBS is meeting in a church building until they can build a classroom built on the land they bought.

Nile Theological College in Juba steps out in faith every day. With the cost of everything going up daily, it is hard for the college to meet all of its needs but still, the students come to learn, and the teachers come to teach. Paying for electricity, internet, and the noon meal for everyone is not easy and yet, somehow, they are moving forward.

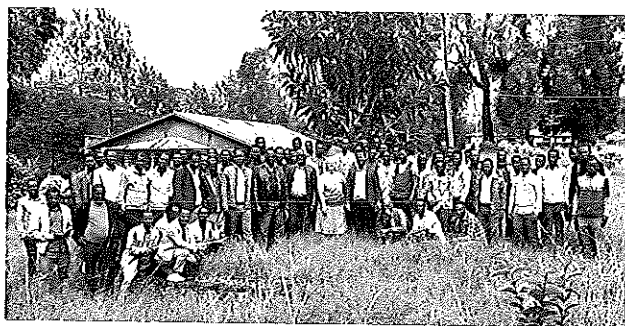
So, I came away from that visit with a new perspective on stepping out in faith. We cannot always know what tomorrow will be like, but we

do have to ask God, daily, what He wants us to do for that day or what He wants us to be working towards even if we are not certain how we will accomplish a task.

I think of the woman in the Bible who believed that if she could just touch the hem of Jesus' cloak she would be healed. (Luke 8:43-48) or the blind man receiving his sight (Luke 18: 35-43). It was their faith that healed them. It is the faith of these Christians in the Horn of Africa that keeps that going each and every day. Is it easy? No, but they fortify themselves with scripture, prayer, and praise and start and end each day with prayer.

Please keep Sudan, Ethiopia, and South Sudan in your prayers. Pray for the church in these countries that they can be the voice of peace and reconciliation and that they keep stepping out in faith, trusting God to place their feet where they need to be and the words in their mouths that they need to say.

Sharon



Students and staff at the Charles Haspel's Bible School in Mizan Teferi, Ethiopia

For more photos and letters please scan the QR code to access Sharon Kandel's profile page.



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