



March, 2017



Dear friends,

With a grateful heart I am sending you this newsletter from South Sudan. In January I left the Netherlands not knowing where we would continue our teacher training program. Last year we had encountered some insecurity situations due to the raising conflict in the area of our college. At the beginning of this year the management team of ECC realized that going back to the college wouldn't be an option as the area is still insecure. They found a compound available in Yei to temporarily train and accommodate our students. Though the situation in Yei town was still tense when we arrived, we have seen grate improvements during our stay. As a result of some incidents that were almost going in a direction of a genocide, many people fled out of the town last year and are now finding their refuge in camps in Uganda. Many schools, shops and hospitals closed their doors. It was our desire to let the opening of our college be an encouragement for the people in Yei and for those who left to come back to the town to live in peace with each other. Before we received our students we had some staff-meetings and a workshops. We shared our objectives of our being in Yei and the opening of the college. It was amazing to hear the South Sudanese colleagues expressing their desire to give hope to the students for a bright future, to transform them and help them to live a Christ-like life in unity and love with each other. I personally feel so blessed to join their vision of being part of the peace-building process.

When people see that cross they say "Yei for Jesus, Jesus for Yei". Before I travelled to Yei this year, I got the insight that Jesus can act as the Prince of Peace through His Body (which are Christians). I shared in our first class devotion with the students how I see them being part of a new move in South Sudan,, by being One in Christ no matter were they come from, living an exemplary live in peace with each other and while bearing the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is our vision to see this group of students (and staff) attracting more people in South Sudan to join their mission for peace and transformation in the nation to glorify God. It is surely a blessing and a miracle that more than 60 students have taken the courageous step to come to Yei town, to complete their studies and participate in the mission for peace. As a college we are still facing many challenges in Yei. I would therefore like to encourage you all to keep praying for our staff, students and mission.

In this newsletter I have included an extra page with details and pictures about our first graduation party in the refugee camp in Ajuong Thok. It took place on the 4th of March and it was an unforgettable experience for the graduants, our education department team and all others who celebrated it with us. I thank God for allowing me to experience it and I want to thank you all for being part of our mission through your prayers and support. As the theme of this year is to 'Moving Forward Together' it is my hope that you will also continue to move forward together with us in 2017.

Staff-members of our college



Students back in class



Cross placed in Yei

### Emmanuelle

When the students arrived in Yei, we were surprised to see that one of our female students for the program of Theology had made it to come to the college while she was pregnant. Only few days later she delivered her baby in the student dorm. It was in the middle of the night, there were no hospitals or midwives nearby, but a courageous student called Yeska made herself available to assist her in the delivery process. A beautiful baby girl was born. We all call her Emmanuelle, because she is born in Emmanuel Christian College. Her birth is a beautiful confirmation that God is with us wherever we are. A new life is a sign of new hope. And as I look in the eyes of this baby girl, it is my prayer that all children in South Sudan will grow up in a loving and caring environment in their homes and schools. May they learn how to walk in Christ's footsteps.



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## First Graduation Ceremony in Refugee Camp Ajuong Thok

On the 4th of March a historical graduation ceremony took place in the refugee camp Ajuong Thok. It was a colorful celebration in which 70 teachers from Primary Schools of Lutheran World Federation received their Certificate of Education from Emmanuel Christian College. The 70 teachers participated in a 10-months intensive in-service teacher training. The aim of the training was to equip student teachers with knowledge and pedagogical skills



to improve their teaching, to encourage the participants to become reflective teachers who understand their own role and that of their learners in the classroom. During the training student teachers did a lot of cooperative activities to prepare them for positive teamwork with their colleagues in the school.

Student teachers worked extremely hard as they combined their teaching responsibilities with full participation in this intensive training. Some students were so committed that sometimes they would not eat meals during the day to ensure that they would be in class in time. In the evening some students gathered together under the streetlights to do their group-assignments, because they did not have a torch at home. All 70 participants completed their assignments, presentations and exams successfully.



During the joyful graduation ceremony the teachers were placed in the spotlights. Before the celebration started the graduates marched around in the camp while singing joyful songs about unity. When the official charging of certificates started, the whole congregation started rejoicing. As the graduates came forward one by one to receive their certificates, mothers, friends and other people from the congregation cheered them up as they jubilated in their achievement and gave them some creative decorations. It was an emotional moment as some students came forward with tears in their eyes.



Students received congratulations from all official invited guests. The UNHCR representative emphasized that every teacher is influencing so many lives of children and are therefore having a very important profession. The guests of honour of the celebration were the Minister of Education and representative of the Governor of Ruweng. Their speeches were encouraging as they were cheering up the graduates.

After the celebration all graduates enjoyed a lunch together with their friends and relatives. The graduates expressed that this was a wonderful day which they would never forget in their lives. It has brought great joy in Ajuong Thok and has been an encouragement for all refugees to continue with education.



On the radio program that was broadcasted in the evening, students expressed in an interview: "In the beginning we had nothing in our hands, but now we have something great to pass on to our learners" "It is now our right time to put in practice what we have learned during the courses. We are having a responsibility. If our learners fail, it is because of ourselves, we can't blame anyone, because we have now undergone training."

