



UNDER TREE SCHOOLS

Rev. Joseph and Mrs Karin Ayok-Loewenberg
52 Boileau Road, Barnes, London SW13 9BL

May 2007

Dear Friends

Joseph and I are writing to you to bring you up to date with exciting developments for the Under Tree Schools. A lot has happened since last autumn, and all our thanks go to God who has been so faithful. We thank you all for your prayers and your donations which have helped to bring this about.

More detail below, but first **an invitation to a gathering** to meet Joseph who will be back in England next month. He will have a lot to share, and you can find out about the new school and what conditions in Sudan are like. We hope he will have pictures to show us. And we would like your thoughts about what our long term plans should be.

The meeting will be on **Saturday 30 June** at St Mary's Church in Barnes, south west London (a short bus ride from Hammersmith). It will start at 12am, break for a lunch in church and should finish by about 3pm. So you could either make it a day trip or build it into a London weekend. Do come: we would love to see you again. Please let me know if you plan to attend, so we can lay on enough lunch. If you require over-night accommodation, we can offer that!

Joseph has been working in his role in the Government of Southern Sudan, as Director of Religious Affairs, since last October. This has been hard work, but a fascinating time in the creation of a new Government in a new country which has been in civil war for most of the last 50 years. He will have a lot of stories to tell us.

Meanwhile things have been happening back in England too. Under Tree Schools has become a charity. We have confirmed that our aim is to build a school for girls – the state is providing education for boys but has limited resources to teach girls. We feel that young women need education, both to help them develop on a personal basis and to help them help their future families and communities to have a better standard of life. We also want to provide vocational training - for the pupils and for adults. The buildings can be used in the evenings and at weekends for adult education. Also, we want to provide theological training by extension for the local communities.

After generations of war it is as much about the "rebuilding" of people as it is about the rebuilding of infrastructure. God is the cornerstone of our school and he has sustained our efforts throughout the last years.

The school is in Malek, Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State (in the West of Southern Sudan), the area that Joseph grew up in. Joseph is now organising the opening of the school to 300 pupils. Teachers are being appointed, the children registered, and an advisory committee created from the local community who are strongly supportive of the project.

To start with, the children will be taught under the trees as in our schools during the civil war. Joseph has been buying building materials and the community has been making bricks and gathering stone, sand and thatch. The first buildings will provide accommodation for the teachers. The second stage of building will provide classrooms, and the third stage more classrooms and a chapel.

Running the school and building it need money of course. With your help we have already raised the amazing amount of £100,000 over the last six months, and this is enough to build stage one of the school and to run it for its first year through to spring 2008. We are very grateful to all who have made donations. As well as a number of you who have given individual gifts, we also thank very sincerely Thomas Church in Basel and St Mary's Church Barnes, who have made such generous contributions both in money and practical support. A Swiss Association based in Winterthur was formed last August and they have been promoting our work.

We are now looking to fund the second and third stages of the building work, which we anticipate may cost over £70,000 in total. We can start the work as soon as we have the finance. If you can help us again with a donation this would be wonderful.

Under Tree Schools can now reclaim Gift Aid tax refunds (worth 28% of your donation) direct from the Government. I enclose a Gift Aid form in favour of UTS. Please make a Gift Aid declaration if you pay tax and send it with your donation.

We and our fellow trustees of the UTS charity have made a long-term commitment to stick with the school and its community. So we will continue to finance the operating costs of the school, including staff wages, educational materials, pupils' uniforms etc. It would help us very much if you felt you were able to make a similar continuing commitment, through a standing order.

Our website is at www.stmarybarnes.org (click on the tree in the top right corner of the home page). It gives lots of background information about our project and Sudan and we update it with the latest news.

If you have an email address and would be happy for us to contact you that way rather than by letter, this would save us money. Please email me at ayokloewenberg@fastmail.fm to let me know your email address.

We have a growing number of groups of supporters, at Thomas Church Basel, at Winterthur in Switzerland, at St Mary's Church Barnes, in Langton Matravers and in Canada. If you would like us to visit your church or community to talk about UTS do please let me know!

Joseph and I want to take this opportunity to thank our fellow trustees of the Under Tree Schools charity for their commitment to this project, and for leading the work to get the school to the point of opening. We are very grateful to them.

Joseph, Aluel and Ashol join me in sending you our love, and our hope that we will meet soon. On 30 June, perhaps?

Every blessing

Karin Ayok-Loewenberg