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## A time to embrace, and a time to refrain... a time to keep, and a time to cast away



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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, SOUTH SUDAN

We were reluctant sojourners when we returned home to the United States this past summer to start a year of home assignment, our first since 2005-2006. Coming home is something we look forward to; we enjoy seeing family, friends, visiting & speaking at churches...and all the amenities familiar to home. On this return trip home, however, we were cognizant that we had left a country in crisis, friends in need, and a work unfinished. South Sudan needs all the doctors, teachers, and workers we can send, but who would take our place?

We have been encouraged to see that the work goes on and that needs are being met by the faithfulness and diligence of our South Sudanese colleagues. As Americans, we have a tendency to want to do things ourselves; we confront problems head-on and fix them with our own hands. Such an approach would have undermined our work in South Sudan and caused it to grind to a halt upon our departure. We are not 'Doctors without Borders'; we don't send teams of foreign doctors, nurses, and logicians to render services in crisis situations. Rather we build and equip national workers to do the same.

Upon departing South Sudan we left behind a team of health care workers, South Sudanese refugees, recruited actually from within the camps. They continue to provide health care each and every day. We still play a strategic role (ordering medicine, reporting to donors) but the essential work is being carried on by those we left behind.

Similarly, Ann's work in South Sudan these past four years has involved establishing a Christian school in South Sudan's capital and providing books and educational opportunities for South Sudanese children in very challenging settings. This work also continues to this day in part due to faithful South Sudanese partners.



As we travel in the U.S. from state to state during this time of home assignment, we remain in touch with our teams and colleagues in South Sudan.

Just last month, Bill was ordering medicine and filling out data sheets while Ann was driving on Route 40 from Arizona to California. Ann has spoken to churches and schools about her work with children and is raising support for our return trip while receiving very encouraging letters from the teachers she left behind, on how the school continues to grow.

There is a time and season for everything; a time to plant and a time to harvest, a time to work and a time to rest. We are thankful during this time out of South Sudan that we are able to remain in touch with the workers which God provided. The harvest is plentiful and there are significant opportunities and challenges ahead.

**Colossians 3:23-24**

*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*

