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GLOBAL OUTREACH



Home from the Sudan with Plans to Return

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The first time the electricity went out in Khartoum, Judi Gregory panicked.

As business manager for the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware, Gregory had become accustomed, of course, to the reliability of things like electricity, clean running water, and phone service. She had taken for granted the ability to walk down the street without fear, drive to the store without attracting stares, take pictures without being detained by armed men.

But now Gregory was a missionary in the capital city of Northern Sudan, an African country of 40 million people just south of Egypt. From May to August, she worked in Khartoum and nearby cities to help reorganize the finances and communications of the fractured Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS).

So with the Internet still accessible and her laptop computer running on a two-hour battery, Gregory lit a candle and frantically wrote blog en-

tries and emails.

"I was praying the lights would come back on before my battery died," Gregory said. "That was the link to my world, my friends, my family."

Gregory's journey to Sudan began two years ago with an eight-day CREDO retreat in Orlando, Florida. She's a member of Saints Andrew and Matthew in Wilmington, but she began looking for ways to become involved in the larger Episcopal Church. She'd considered joining the Peace Corps many years ago, so the idea of mission work was appealing. When David Copley, the Episcopal Church's Mission Personnel Officer, said he needed a CPA in Sudan, she was shocked.

"My first comment was, 'Don't they need a lot more in Sudan than just a CPA?'" she said.

But the Episcopal Church of Sudan did indeed need an accountant because it had fractured into three parts during the civil war that ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. (The Sudanese church adopted the American model of an Episcopal church when the country broke

from the United Kingdom in 1956.) Gregory made a ten-day orientation visit in February and returned in May to the conservative and predominantly Muslim northern part of Sudan.

"I fell in love with the country and with the people," Gregory said.

The house where she lived was one of hundreds clustered around a rectangular, dirt courtyard the size of two soccer fields. In the evenings, boys would come out to play soccer, and Gregory would be the only woman watching them and cheering them on. Through soccer, though, she came to know other people in the neighborhood.

"It's strange that the thing they call football and I call soccer was the one thing that was familiar and the thing we had in common," Gregory said.

The streets are packed with taxis, buses and motorized rickshaws, all rumbling, honking and ignoring the traffic laws. "No one pays attention to traffic lights, traffic signs, lines on the road," she said.

One day she made the short drive to the store without a male escort and attracted the stares of nearly everyone she

passed. The sight of a white woman driving a car by herself was just too bizarre to ignore.

"I was loving it, but I was breaking so many social rules," she said.

By the end of her time in Sudan, Gregory had agreed to be a financial consultant to the new archbishop there, Daniel Deng Bul, and make up to two trips a year to continue her work. Recently, she found out that the Global Mission Committee at St. Peter's in Lewes would send \$1,500 to Sudan for strategic needs in honor of Gregory's work.

Whatever change she brought to Sudan, Gregory said the experience changed her forever. For instance, she actually learned to enjoy power outages.

"I came to really appreciate that down time," she said.

Visit the Blogs page of the Diocese of Delaware website – www.DioceseofDelaware.net – for a link to Judi's blog of her Sudan experience.