

# IN PARTNERSHIP

December 2019



## What Does Farming Look Like in South Sudan?

Ox-Ploughing in Mayan Tiit, South Sudan

What comes to mind when you think of farming? For many of us it might be tractors and harvesters being driven around fields. It might be the ads on TV showing a single apple being picked, and trucks driving to your local supermarket.

In South Sudan, farming looks very different. Many people lack even simple tools. They have to plough fields with a stick. It's exhausting work, and it takes a long time to plant even a small amount of crops. Much like in Australia, a lack of rain can decimate a harvest. And because only a small amount can be planted, it's even easier to lose a whole crop.

This is what farming was for Mary.

"I used my knees and my hands, I got scars on my knees and my hands," she explains. "With the stick, you can't plough enough. If the rain lays off, you may not get a good production."

But last year, Mary was able to join the Plough Project. Together with a neighbour, she was given oxen and a plough, and trained in how to instruct

them to work. For her, this gift has been life-changing!

"Now the ox does the pushing of the plough, and you can plough a bigger space and guarantee yourself a big harvest, even if the rain is laid off," Mary says. When ploughing with a stick, you only have three days after rain to plant before the soil is too hard to work again. With oxen, they can plant over a much longer period!

This year, she has been able to grow so much more food!

"The production is really good – really different – almost 15 sacks instead of three.

"This is because of the power of the bull. With human beings you cannot manage that."

The harvest is plenty for Mary and her family. They have enough to eat, with plenty of nuts, grains and herbs left over!

"With the additional sacks I can sell one out for the tuition fees of my child and if I have three children, that is

three sacks," Mary explains. "Then I will use the extra sacks to cultivate more land in future so I get more production in future years."

The gift of an Ox Plough has helped Mary cultivate her gift for farming! And did you know? You can give a Great Gift to someone like Mary this Christmas!

From an ox and a plough, to a pair of baby chicks, every Great Gift makes life changing difference! Many people lack the time, energy or resources they need to realise their gifts and fulfil their potential. Your Great Gift can make a real impact on their lives.

If you want to receive a specially designed gift card, mailed to you in time for Christmas, your Great Gift must be ordered before December 13!

Or, you can print your own card – right up until December 23.

You can find out more, and choose a Great Gift to give, by going to our website:

[www.GreatGifts.org.au](http://www.GreatGifts.org.au)

## News & Events

### Great Gifts

Give a Great Gift this Christmas, and help people in need realise their own gifts!



Your last chance to order a printed gift card in time for Christmas is **December 13!** [greatgifts.org.au](http://greatgifts.org.au)

### COCOA Christmas Offering

Some of the world's poorest communities have been trapped in poverty for generations. They have less resources and opportunities to help them break this chain. This Christmas you can help these communities. Your support empowers some of the world's poorest communities, to find breakthroughs. It helps them achieve solutions that once seemed impossible.

Find out more information, and give a breakthrough today, by going to [www.gmp.org.au/breakthrough](http://www.gmp.org.au/breakthrough)

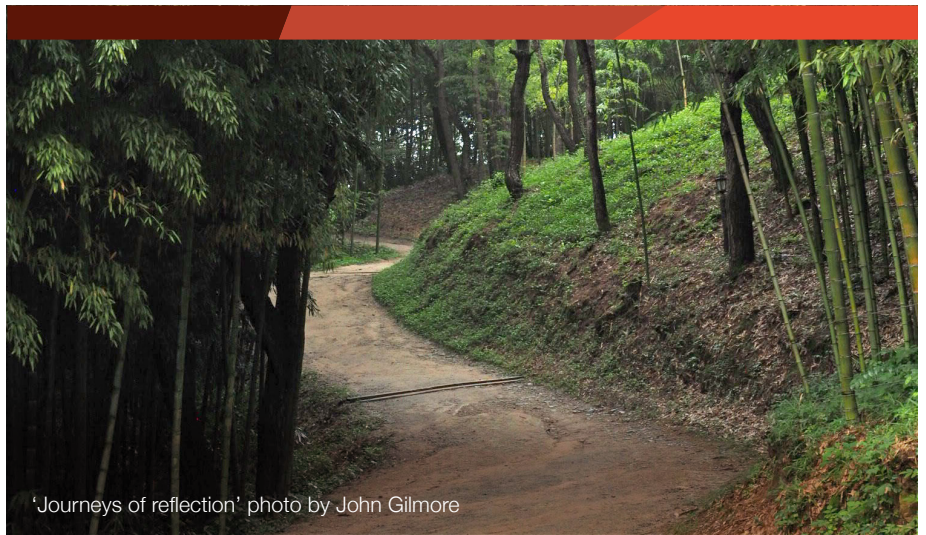
### Merry Christmas from GMP

"Let the Heavens Rejoice and the Earth be glad." Psalm 96:11

We at GMP wish you and your loved ones a very joyful and peaceful Christmas. As this is our last edition of In Partnership for 2019, we wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.

In Partnership will return in February 2020. The GMP office will be closed from 12pm on the 24th of December, then will reopen on the 2nd of January 2020.

We look forward to bringing you more news in the New Year. Have a wonderful Christmas and New Year from all of us at GMP!



'Journeys of reflection' photo by John Gilmore

## What Happens to the Heart?

'What happens to the heart?' is a question posed by the late Leonard Cohen in a recently released song. His haunting words lead me to reflect on what it is that strengthens and nurtures our heart. Using the heart as a metaphor for our deepest experience of humanity and life I am led to reflecting on my heart and Advent and Christmas.

The Christmas season includes the reality of human experience. We cannot pretend. People are living with the impact of bushfire, storms and drought. Australia's First Peoples are on a long journey to feel heard and understood after offering the 'Statement from the Heart' to us all. At the same time others also tell stories of joy, discovery, achievement and hope.

Such experiences are added to, when one considers our overseas partners facing conflict in South Sudan, drought in Zimbabwe, and political tension in other settings. We also hear of people coming to faith and new churches being planted.

How in all of this do we care for our 'heart'? One possibility may be to use the words of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) and allow these words of hope nurture and renew us. Mary celebrates with confidence the coming actions of God and the hope she has for the world. Her rejoicing flows from her personal experience of God and leads to a telling of, and confidence in, what God will do. This is summed up in the statement that 'God will remember his mercy and his promise to Abraham'.

This hope, generated out of promise of blessing and linked to confidence in the consistency of God's goodness, is something that we can focus on. Undercutting all the complexity of our world is the gift of a baby – God is with us. Mary's hope is fulfilled. Our hearts are lifted, renewed and healed.

May this gift of goodness and grace bring joy in your heart this Christmas season.

*John Gilmore,*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE GMP TEAM 2019**





SPOTLIGHT

Church denominations are overcoming past divisions in PNG

# Sharing the Gospel to Bring People Closer

Churches often bring together people from many backgrounds, through a shared belief of God. In Australia, it's not uncommon to see many churches of different denominations along the same street!

But in remote Papua New Guinea, this isn't the norm. Communities have memories of past times with serious warlike conflict with one another. Some areas are also strongly denominational. But people are also working hard to use their faith to bring the people around them closer, and to heal past divisions.

This is what Pastor Simon does. Based at Tumba on the Ramu River, Simon works with churches along the Ramu. He visits with their pastors, prays with them and trains them – and even supports them with his own money.

Three of these churches have been planted by him, and cross cultural and denominational boundaries. Missingu, Kwanga, and Wangebu Churches of Christ are all in traditional Catholic areas, and villages where the people were 'sworn enemies' of the people of Tumba.

Despite these barriers, Pastor Simon had faith that God wanted him to share with these people following their invitation to come. So he went, and started to build a church.

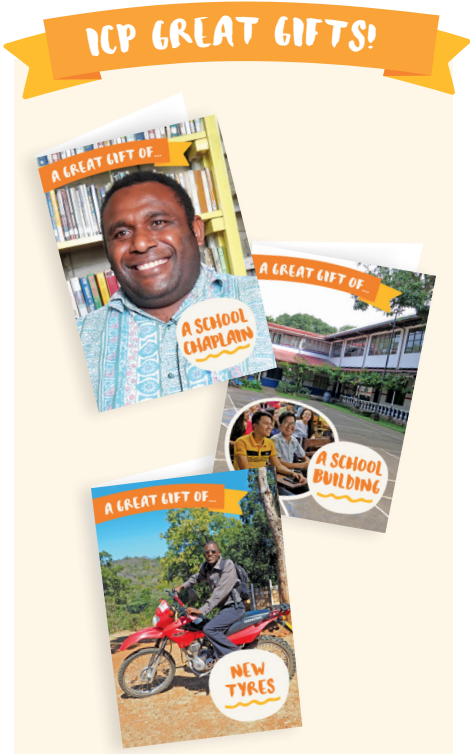
At first, the Catholic priest was upset, and worried that people would leave the Catholic church. But now, he understands that more people have come to know God, and built a relationship with Jesus.

Now they have good news. People are seeing the power of God to bring them together in love and service. Women and men from these three communities travelled to Gandep to take part in ministry training. Pastor Simon was one of the people there who helped equip them to go back and lead their churches. Now, the three churches are self-led!

The people of Tumba were once enemies of these villagers. Now, they are brothers and sisters in Christ. They share the same gospel and love of Jesus. One of the women who came to train as a pastor met a man from Tumba, and they fell in love. They are now married – something unheard of between these communities before!

Through the power of sharing the gospel, Pastor Simon was able to

bring these people closer. Closer with God, and closer with each other. Evangelism can help close the gaps that have formed between people. Through God, violent histories and vast differences have been overcome!



You can support the work of International Church Partnerships by buying an ICP Great Gift at [www.GreatGifts.org.au](http://www.GreatGifts.org.au)



Left: Garang, board member of the LAID Foundation of South Sudan (LAFOSS)  
Right (inset): Students attending Peace Clubs

## Peace is the Breakthrough

Since gaining independence, South Sudan has struggled with war and violence. The Civil War has been ongoing since 2013. Parents and children have been torn apart. Hundreds of thousands have been killed. Half the population suffers hunger, because they don't have the stability to grow food. South Sudan needs a breakthrough.

Breakthrough comes from a brand new approach to overcoming struggles. The key to breakthrough in South Sudan is peace.

Garang is one of the board members of the LAID Foundation of South Sudan (LAFOSS). He grew up in Sudan, during the Second Sudanese Civil War. When he was just a boy, the war came to his village. His family had no choice but to flee their home.

"We walked night and day in the bush," Garang says. "In the grass, and in the thorny places. I got pierced. My soles now are spottish.

"I don't want this mark to be in soles of others."

This experience is why he is passionate about the LAFOSS Peace Project. By working with community leaders, churches and schools, LAFOSS is helping make breakthroughs in their country.

Earlier in the year, LAFOSS helped establish 'Peace Clubs' in local schools. Leaders from each school were trained to resolve differences without any violence. They were able to take these skills back to their schools. They taught peace building to their classmates.

"Before the war we were in different tribes, but now we are not separated," one of students, Martha, said. "No one was this tribe or that tribe at the workshop. We are not going to do that anymore."

The attitudes of the next generation are changing through these projects. The young people of South Sudan can break through the division of the past.

Without breakthrough, poverty can't be overcome. The conflict in South Sudan is the direct cause of poverty

for so many people living there. Without breakthrough, there will still be people living without food, water, or stability in their lives.

Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) partners with projects all around the world to help enable breakthroughs. But breakthrough looks different for everyone!

Breakthrough for a family in Bangladesh is a safe and hygienic sanitation system.

Breakthrough for a Zimbabwean family is a loan to start a small business, so they can take care of an abandoned child.

And breakthrough for South Sudan is bringing peace projects to more of the country.

You can enable breakthroughs in people's lives this Christmas! Your gift will empower them to break free of poverty!

Find out more information, and give a breakthrough today, by going to [www.gmp.org.au/breakthrough](http://www.gmp.org.au/breakthrough)