

May 17th 2009 Grand Opening Celebration

The Chali Church Renovation

During the 1930-1950 season the body of Christ began growing in a remote location in south Sudan among the Uduk people of Chali, Blue Nile State. In the 1960's the enthusiastic local congregation constructed a brick church building as their worship centre that served also as a hub for the surrounding Uduk communities and their congregations. But sadly during the war that raged from 1983-2005 the brick church was badly damaged in the fighting. The people had fled the conflict and were living in Ethiopia, hidden from the fighting in the refugee camps during these years. When they were officially repatriated from Ethiopia back to Sudan in 2006, they came back to their beloved building which was now just a shell.



In 2005 when Tohru and I went to visit Chali for the first time, the broken structure was oddly encouraging. Still standing but cracked and riddled with bullet holes, it was a testimony to the 'church' that I knew still existed. Broken but not destroyed, in fact thriving.

Tohru and I submitted the Chali church to the Samaritan's Purse Church Rebuilding Program in 2005 and began to gather building materials for it. During the wait we managed to bring them a massive custom made white tarp for the roof. This however didn't last long in the sun and wind so the church build a large local materials church beside the brick building while they waited for the renovations. It was this spring (2009) that SP along with the Chali congregation was able to renovate the building under the supervision of a very kind and competent Kenyan builder named Gilbert.

At 9:30 in the morning on Sunday May 17th 2009 I (Claire) drove into Chali, Sudan with the Samaritan's Purse Kurmuk team to join the celebration of the newly renovated Chali church. We arrived to a very large gathering, which greatly encouraged the SP team. (I am used to large Uduk gatherings so for me it was a normal Sunday morning!) A large group



Pastor Joshua cutting the ribbon

had gathered near the front door of the church and everyone was singing. We were quickly ushered to the front door where 2 sticks with a ribbon tied between them were firmly stuck into the ground near the door. Several hymns were sung and then Pastor Joshua gave a short devotion from Nehemiah 12: 27-30. He then cut the ribbon and we all filed into the new worship hall singing *Onward Christian Soldiers*. The new building is beautiful and simple! Bright and clean! The morning was a normal worship service with extra speeches at the end and special songs from a youth choir, another special Chali choir and the older folks who remembered the original church before it was destroyed during the war. It was a great celebration!

The building also has a foyer room and an office on the opposite end. The office they have dedicated to Old Testament translation and I am in the process of outfitting the office for them. It is very exciting!

The people are thrilled and wanted you to share in their day and the rebuilding of their lives in Sudan!



Youth Choir



Chali Choir



Special song from the older generation

Before

After

