



Dear Friends in Christ,

I am grateful to you for allowing me to travel to Ethiopia and Tanzania this past month. And I thank the Danish Dolls for paying for my airfare with proceeds from the Aebelskiver Dinners.

The trip to Ethiopia didn't go exactly as planned as we were unable to get permission to enter the refugee camps. We were, however, able to meet with 19 Mabaan people who live in the refugee camps in Ethiopia near the border of South Sudan. We were able to ask questions and hear them talk about what life is like in the camps. We were also able to share our hopes for our relationship with those in the camps.

The elders who met with us expressed their gratitude for our interest in providing food assistance. They were clearly very happy that someone from America was taking interest in their lives. They feel stuck between their homeland which is in the midst of violent political conflict and the rest of the world which seems to have no place for them. Some have been able to escape the camps, but those exits are not very open right now.

Ethiopia, the United Nations, and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) are trying to provide some assistance to the refugees, but it is not enough. Monthly food rations last only two weeks and sometimes come late. A doctor writes prescriptions, but there is no medicine available in the camp and no money to buy medications from the nearest town. There are schools, but the teachers aren't well trained. There is farmland, but no money to rent it and buy seed and no legal guarantee that the refugees can actually harvest what they grow. There is water to drink, but it is river water and not very safe to drink.

What we are giving is just a small gesture of support. There are well over 20,000 people in these two camps. But it is possible that we are the only Church doing anything for them at this point. Having met the leaders who are trying to help us bring food to the hungry in these camps, I trust that they will do the best that they can. But there is no way we can satisfy all who are hungry with only \$1000 worth of food each month.

I am very grateful to all who have donated toward our refugee food aid fund. We have received over \$11,000 this year. We will be sending \$1000 each month and maybe more going forward as we assess the income to the fund. It is a small gesture, but it is also a gesture of hope. The hope is that our Mabaan friends in the camps can work with the Ethiopian government and some NGOs so that we can also supply funds that will support the drilling of wells and the renting and farming of land.

It seems to me that the Holy Spirit has called us to this work of compassion. Compassion is a blessing both to those who receive it and to those who give it. I pray that this relationship will be a blessing to us all.

Yours in Christ, *Phil Nielsen*