



Nicci Maxwell

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Location: South Sudan



What I do: Providing paediatric and neonatal medical care to local and refugee communities, and training and supporting local paediatric teams

Dear friends,

My last letter came to you from Liverpool shortly before Christmas. This one comes from Oxford and if you read on, you'll find out where I might be when writing the next one!

In January I enjoyed three weeks of family time in South Africa, which included celebrating my eldest nephew's excellent results in his school-leaving exams. I also received some results of my own for the DTM&H course that I completed in Liverpool last year. I am thrilled to say that I passed the course... and with a very unexpected distinction. I was also more than surprised to discover that I had achieved the highest mark in the class for the "Tropical Disease Biology" component of the course – that's the bit that involved practical microscope work (my nemesis at medical school!) and knowing about all the different creepy-crawlies that transmit the various diseases. Thank you to each one of you who prayed for me during my studies.

At the end of February, I flew back to Kisoro to catch up with my colleagues and the work there. What a super 10 days seeing so many of my favourite people and places! Potter's Village Medical Centre seems to be thriving under the care of the local team and with the support of an enthusiastic new diocesan health coordinator. The work among the Batwa continues too and I was warmly welcomed in the village. Among the wonderful stories I can share is that one of our Batwa mums who is living with HIV proudly told me that her second child is now definitely HIV negative. I told her how proud I was of how hard she had tried in taking her own medicine through pregnancy and in complying with almost two years of treatment and testing for her daughter and she promptly burst into tears! I was rather taken aback but she explained that no one had ever told her they were proud of her before. (Cue a few tears from me too!) She is very excited that some HIV services will soon be provided from a new clinic at Potter's Village and couldn't wait to transfer her care to the new clinic because "they are kind to me there!" Give thanks for Potter's Village and do keep praying for them to continue their excellent work.

I then spent five days at CMS's Africa People in Mission Conference in Kenya before moving on to Juba, capital of South Sudan, to visit ACROSS, a South Sudanese Christian organisation with a history of partnership



A magnificent early morning in Durban.

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With each other
To the edges**



with CMS. South Sudan is the world's newest country (2011) and is struggling with the after effects of war and internally displaced people from ongoing local conflicts as well as thousands of refugees from the conflicts in its neighbouring countries. I spent time alongside the Nile River in the city of Juba where I visited Al Sabah Children's Hospital. Its 13 paediatricians (there are only 25 in the country) have an incredibly challenging job as South Sudan currently has the world's highest rates of both maternal and newborn mortality and the world's fourth highest rates of infant and early childhood mortality.

Despite a heatwave which caused the government to close schools for a week – the temperature went up to over 40°C every day – I also went to see some of ACROSS's work at Gorom refugee settlement. They have a small but very dedicated staff team who offer primary health care to refugees and local people in a very challenging environment.

After lots of meetings and discussions in the weeks since I returned, I can now share with you that my next placement will be in Juba! As things stand, my time will be split between ACROSS's refugee work and the children's hospital – including trying to establish a functioning neonatal unit and participating in teaching the next generation of South Sudanese paediatricians.

I seem to be back to full health again (thank you for your continued prayers), so I hope to move to Juba at the end of June. That's not long and there is so much to do before I go! Please pray for all the preparations. There are lots of issues to consider, not least safety and security, but I have found a one-bedroom flat in a secure compound belonging to another mission organisation and I'm looking forward to having my own home again. I am already in touch with another expat who will be living nearby and hope that we might become friends. Please pray for the community I will be joining and for the people I will be working with in both the hospital and the refugee camp. My prayer is that I will settle in quickly and find the exact roles and opportunities that God had ordained for me there.

"...all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Psalm 139:16

Unfortunately, I won't be able to see everyone to say farewell in person, but if you (or your church) are very keen to catch up before I go, please give me a call or drop me an email as soon as you get this letter and I'll do my best to fit you in. Otherwise, perhaps you'd like to book ahead for my next home assignment in the UK in summer 2025! If you'd like to review your financial support for my work in light of this new placement, please get in touch with me or with Julie Hinckley at CMS (julie.hinckley@churchmissionsociety.org).

Thank you for your continued support for me and the work I am doing.

Every blessing, Nicci



Photos from top to bottom: Some of the Batwa children in Mikingo village; Visiting the Potter's team – Sister Jovia, Rev Erasmus (diocesan health coordinator) and Idah (project administrator); Gorom refugee settlement, South Sudan; early morning overlooking the Nile River in Juba.



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