



Ruth Radley
CMS mission partner
Sudan

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Hey you guys,

Do you enjoy birthday parties? I love them, especially if they are for my birthday

I was honoured to be at a very special birthday party earlier this year. I am now living in the newest country in the world! This party was to celebrate the Independence of the Republic of South Sudan.

Back in January, there was a special vote for all the people living in the South of Sudan, to say whether they wanted their

country to remain as one big one, or to separate into two smaller ones. The people living in the South have had a very hard time, with two long wars since they became independent from Britain in 1956. This has meant that it has been hard for people, with friends and family that they loved being killed, or having to leave their homes to find somewhere safe to live. You and I cannot imagine what people have lived through. But many people here have a strong love for Jesus, which has meant that in the hard times they prayed to Him for help and protection.

On Independence Day I went to 'Freedom Square' in our town and enjoyed celebrating with the whole town – there was no one in the other streets! There was such an amazing atmosphere of Joy and hope! We have our own national anthem and a flag, which we had been using for a long time before we were independent.

There is something very special about the flag in the Republic of South Sudan! You can use it to

The flag of the Republic of South Sudan flying high



Ruth Radley (CMS-YEI)
C/O: MAF
PO Box 1
Kampala
Uganda
ruthieradley@gmail.com



Celebrating independence



With my friends Agnes, Gloria and Rhondda in Freedom Square

tell the gospel – the good news of Jesus! I am not sure that the government realised that when it was put together, but it's very handy! Let me tell you how – we use all the different colours!

We look at the Gold star first!

When you read a book, do you sometimes look at the back page to see how it ends? I do sometimes, and that is what we do when we share the story of Jesus with others using these colours!

Gold is the colour of Heaven! It is also the colour of treasure, something so very very special. The bible tells us that the streets of heaven will be paved with GOLD! The bible also tells us that in Heaven, the Glory of God will be so bright that we will not need a sun or moon for light! Wow! In heaven, there is no sickness, no sad tears, no pain, no suffering, and all people who choose to love Jesus will live there forever with Him – in this perfect place! Yippee! (I can't wait!).

Green bit

Green reminds us of the very beginning of the world! The bible tells us that God was here at the very beginning, and His Spirit was there – how exciting! Then He started creating! Light and dark, land and seas, fish, flowers and animals, then people were made in the image of God, which means we are the most precious bit of the whole creation. God created a wonderful world for us to live in with Him – He made us because He wanted to be friends

with us!

Dark bit

But the problem was, humans decided they didn't want to follow God's way, and because God knows what is best for us, this made God very sad as He really wanted to be our friend. Because we do things wrong (called sin), we were separated from God, so we couldn't have a close friendship with Him nor go to heaven. Oh dear, what a problem!

Red bit

Or at least, it would have been a problem if God had not had a plan all along! But He did... yippee! God sent His son Jesus to leave heaven and live on earth as a human – His plan to save us! Jesus is perfect, but He came to earth to take the punishment for all the things we did which were wrong, and was killed on the cross so that we may be forgiven of the wrong things we do. Jesus died, but He rose again three days later! Whoopee! Just as it had been written in the bible YEARS before. Then after being on earth again, He went to live with His Father in heaven.

White bit

When we get muddy on the outside, what do we do? We have a bath and get clean again! When we do things

which are wrong (sin), it is like we are making ourselves muddy on the inside, but we can't get inside ourselves to wash! When we choose to love Jesus and make Him number one in our lives, it is like He gives us an inside wash to make us clean. He is the only one who can do that! Jesus makes us clean... which means that one day we can go to live in Heaven, as then we will be perfect! Woohoo!

Blue bit

The blue bit reminds us of God's special Holy Spirit. When Jesus had died and come back to life again, His work on earth was finished and He was taken back to heaven to live with God the Father again. He promised that He would send His friends a helper, someone who would be with them always, to give them the power that they needed to do what Jesus asked them to do. The Holy Spirit DID come and gave the disciples HIS power, and they did amazing things. The Holy Spirit still lives within us today when we love Jesus, and He gives us the power we need, to do what Jesus asks us to do! How cool is that? Even when we feel we cannot do something, if Jesus has asked us to – we can do it with His Spirit in us giving us the power!

You can use your own words when you share Jesus with your

friends; you don't have to say what I have said here, but why don't you see what you can find in Britain to share Jesus with others? Maybe you can use the sky, sun, flowers, mud or whatever else you can find! It might be hard at times, but when we pray and ask Jesus, He gives us good opportunities and helps us – we are never alone, and Jesus trusts you to do this too! Amazing hey? We are workers together with Him!

There is a drawing of the Republic of South Sudan's flag in this letter, *over the page*, but it needs colouring in! Why don't you look at the drawing, and colour it in using the right colours. As you do so, why not talk to Jesus, and ask Him who you can share His Good News with, and ask Him to give you the strength to do it! Cool!

Always remember you are so special and precious, and Jesus loves to work with you! He could do it on his own, but He chooses to work with us!!

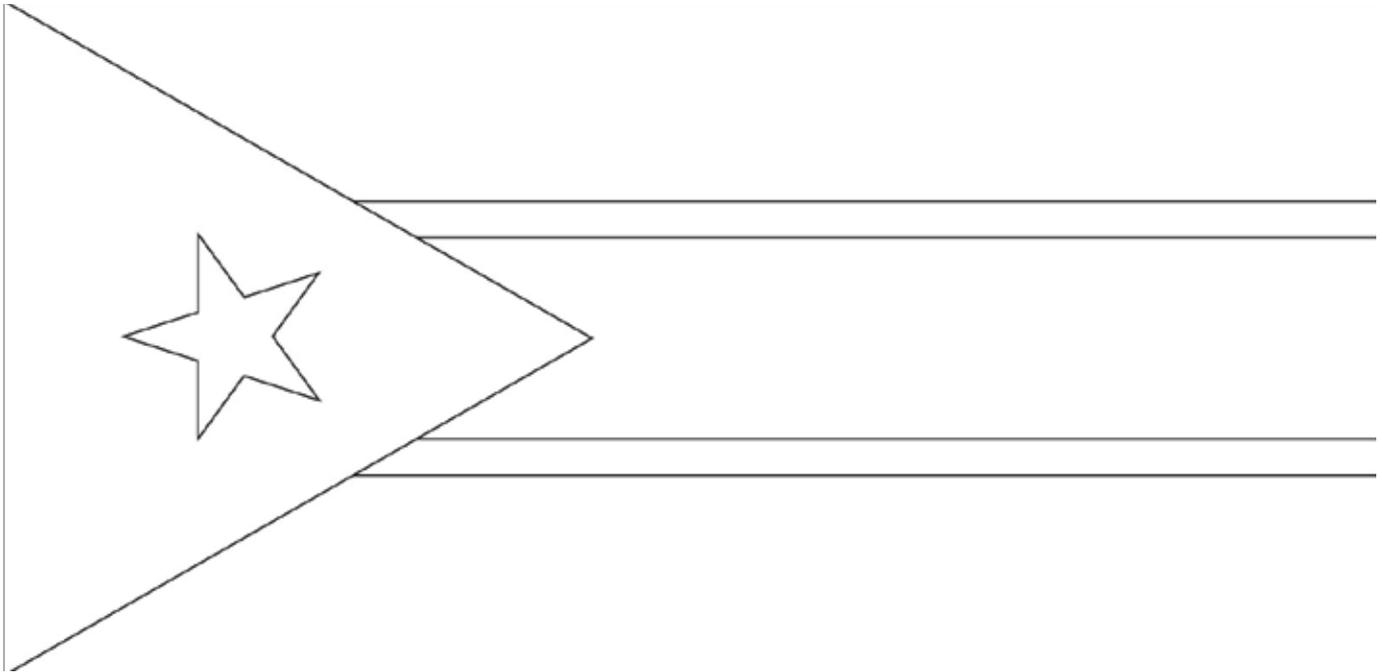
Lots of love

Ruta xxx

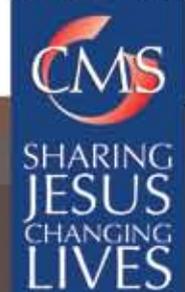
Children using the new flag to share the gospel



Below is a drawing of the Republic of South Sudan's flag, and it needs colouring in! Why don't you look at the drawing, and colour it in using the right colours. As you do so, why not talk to Jesus, and ask Him who you can share His Good News with, and ask Him to give you the strength to do it! Cool!



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Church Mission Society

Watlington Road, Oxford, OX4 6BZ Tel: 01865 787400 Fax: 01865 776375
Email: info@cms-uk.org www.cms-uk.org Registered Charity Number 1131655
Executive Director: The Rev Canon Tim Dakin