

## **Bishop Andudu's U.S. Tour of Eleven Cities**

*This is a story on many levels, not the least of which is  
the story of the Mystery of the Persecuted Church  
and how she becomes for us a way God gathers His family, globally.*

*God in the suffering – raised – living Christ*

*Brings forward to us an ancient and almost forgotten people,*

*The Nubians of Old and New Testament times.*

*The people of the Nuba Mountains give witness*

*Of the nearness of the Lord and His Kingdom.*

*From Bishop Andudu, the youngest of all the Anglican Bishops of the Anglican Communion,*

*We have heard and been present with one who walks with the Lord full of strength, gentleness,  
and grace.*

*May we now continue to walk with him and his people,*

*May we be advocates, intercessors, and fellow supporters in a shared mission enterprise.*

We may, with cause, say Bishop Andudu's visit with us was by virtue of a "happy chance" that included many helping hands behind the scenes. Originally his visit to the U.S. was scheduled for October of 2003; however, because of VISA difficulties, this was not possible. In fact, it looked again like the March 2004 visit would not be possible. But Bishop Andudu finally received his VISA Thursday afternoon, Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, and he departed Nairobi, Kenya, two days later for New York City. All the planning and scheduling for his March visit was now a "go." George Tuto, President of the NCFM Board of Directors, and Mr. Jamal Jange, New York State Representative for the NCFM, greeted Bishop Andudu at Kennedy Airport when he arrived. The next day, Slater Armstrong, with Joining our Voices, joined them a day later.

Eleven cities, beginning with New York City were set to welcome Bishop Andudu, including his coming to Louisiana and our Diocesan Convention. The eleven cities were New York City, Washington, D.C., Knoxville, TN, New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Memphis, TN, Kansas City, KS and MO, Roanoke and Lexington, VA, Dallas, TX, and Omaha, NE. The final stop was back in New York City and a meeting with Fr. Ron Whitmer, NCFM national coordinator. This meeting was to do an exit interview and review the operational details for the work that lies ahead.

At each city Bishop Andudu met both with American church people as well as Nuba and Sudanese in resettlement. At each city he shared the story of the suffering church and the vitality of faith erupting among them. The Episcopal Church in the Sudan is one of the most rapidly growing churches in our Anglican Communion, yet it is one of the most persecuted churches, struggling in the midst of twenty-one years of civil war. The Bishop's Kadugli-Nuba Mountain Diocese, located in the center of the conflict, has been isolated both because of geography and the civil war. Its churches and schools have been destroyed. All basic infrastructures have been reduced to a marginal status.

The Nuba people have survived either by flight into diaspora, some within refugee camps within the Sudan, many beyond its borders, and some immigrating to this county, or by flight into the upper regions of their mountains and its caves. George and Selya Tuto and their family in Baton Rouge are part of the Nuba diaspora here with us. George is on the vestry of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit and also president and founding member of the Nuba Christian Family Mission, first in

Cairo, Egypt in 1997, and then, following immigration to the U.S., he and others in this country reestablished NCFM, USA. It is a 501c3 organization. NCFM is committed to bringing assistance to the people in the Nuba Mountains of the Sudan and those in resettlement in the US. In consultation with Canon Benjamin Musoke-Lubega of the African Desk for Global Mission of our national Church in New York City, NCFM began in February 2003 to invite Bishop Andudu to the U.S. as a first step in addressing its two-fold mission. Considering that Sudan is listed by our State Department as a terrorist nation, it was no small feat to bring Bishop Andudu to the United States.

Last December Bishop Andudu had invited Slater Armstrong of Joining our Voices to come to the Nuba to record and film the music of the Nuba. Slater was the first person from the West to visit the Episcopal Church of the Nuba in over twenty years. Based on this trip Slater produced a DVD of a collage of narrative, music and visuals presented. This material was shown throughout the tour to the eleven cities. Slater served us well giving us a visual insight into the world from which Bishop Andudu lives and serves and the struggle of his people. One of the elder priests in an interview with Slater said, "For many, many years, we have been like orphans, forgotten." Following the showing of the DVD Bishop Andudu shared the story of his people, their faith, their situation, their needs, and the hope for peace in the context of the continuing negotiations for a ceasefire. (cf. the news release and the now signed Protocols, also posted on NCFM's web site). The ceasefire first had been initiated two years ago by U.S. Envoy Senator Danforth, an Episcopal Priest. Here we are brought to another story.

Senator Danforth's home church during the many years he served as a senator was St. Alban's, Washington, D.C. Bishop Andudu had been invited by this church to preach at the Sunday morning service when he would be in Washington, D.C. A year ago last spring, in consultation with Senator Danforth's office, NCFM, at Bishop Andudu's suggestion, raised the possibility of presenting to Senator Danforth an expression of the Nuba people's gratitude for his work securing the ceasefire and the peace effort. A stand-in, and long time friend of Senator Danforth, also a member of St. Alban's, was contacted in case Senator Danforth could not be available. As it turned out, he was not. Senator Danforth was in Kenya, continuing to work for the ceasefire and the peace effort. His stand-in turned out to be Ambassador Robert Oakley, who just two weeks earlier had been with Senator Danforth in the Nuba Mountains. Bishop Andudu presented to Ambassador Oakley for Senator Danforth an ancient Nuba Bowl and expressed the Nuba people's gratitude for Senator Danforth's work in the Sudan. The following morning, Ambassador Oakley invited the Bishop to his home for further conversation. Through Senator Bill Frist, on Tuesday following, a letter of gratitude for President Bush's efforts toward the cease fire and peace was also given by Bishop Andudu.

The response to Bishop Andudu throughout the country has been grand. It has provided not only a chance for the story to be shared, but also opportunity for the faith communities here to respond at a number of levels, including lending support for addressing the rebuilding of the diocese and its churches and establishing the first Christian High School in the Nuba mountains. As of the writing of this article, over \$27,000 has been raised. (cf. "Mission Income Tracking Abstract, 5/25/04) The \$27,000 does not include several gifts provided for Bishop Andudu, including a laptop computer, a video camera, and luggage. In addition, a group in Dallas offered to provide two scholarships for students from the Nuba Mountains to attend Christian University in Kampala, Uganda. Also, this amount does not include \$4,000 and more for Mubarak Bible Institute pledged to Tom and Molly O'Dell of Roanoke, VA, for their 75 mile "walk-about" in the Diocese of Bradford, UK. Also not included in the above amount are two grants under consideration by Trinity Grants, Trinity Church,

Wall St., NYC, one for an agriculture project, and the other for GPRS Communications equipment to link the Kadugli-Nuba Mountain diocese to the outside world.

A special thanks to all the local coordinators in the eleven cities for all their work on behalf of Bishop Andudu. These persons listed below have our deepest gratitude:

Jamal Jange, NCFM State Representative, Brooklyn, NY  
Amin Zakeria, Gen'l Sec., Nuba Mountain International Association, Washington, D.C.  
Slater Armstrong, Joining Our Voices, Knoxville, TN  
George Tuto, Board President, NCFM, Baton Rouge, LA  
The Rev. Nasser Kajou, Memphis, TN  
Salim Aliass Salim, NCFM Exec. Comm., Memphis, TN  
Philip Marajan Toto, NCFM State Representative, Kansas City, MO  
The Rev. Tom O'Dell, Rector, R.E.Lee Memorial Episcopal Church, Lexington, VA  
Karim Musa El-Gassai, NCFM Exec. Comm., Dallas, TX  
Diane Stanton, Dallas, TX  
Yousif Ghaboush, NCFM State Representative, Omaha, NE \*  
The Rev. Judy Yeats, Church of the Resurrection, & Jim Yeats, Omaha, NE

Our expression of thanks would be remiss if we did not also single out besides those noted above, the following who also added greatly to the success of Bishop Andudu's visit.

Faith McDonnell, staff persons with Institute for Religion and Democracy, Washington, D.C.  
The Rev. Frank Wade, Rector, St. Albans Episcopal Church, Bethesda, MD  
Bob Woolfolk, African Roundtable, St. Albans Episcopal Church, Bethesda, MD  
The Rev. Leon Spenser, Ecumenical Advocacy Event, Washington, D.C.  
The Rev. Joe Rhodes, Rector, Church of the Holy Spirit, Baton Rouge, LA  
The Very Rev. David DuPlantier, Dean, Christ's Cathedral, New Orleans, LA  
The Rev. Mike Tan Creti, Rector, All Saints Episcopal Church, Omaha, NE  
Mattiop Luteh-Atem, New Sudan Christian Link, Omaha, NE

I close with an expression of thanks to the National Church Staff focused on African Mission, and particularly Canon Benjamin Musoke-Lubega and his assistant, Paul Ferdinand.

NCFM on behalf of Bishop Andudu and the people of the Nuba says thank you for all the outpouring of prayer and assistance. The experience of being orphans and forgotten has been broken.

A personal comment:

My interest in the mission of the Church, alongside the persecuted Church in places like the Nuba Mountain region of the Sudan, is in part motivated by a desire for our being positioned and attentive along this fault line between the African black Christian world and the Arab Moslem world, now unfortunately in the Sudan under the sway of militant fundamentalist Islamists. Here is a fault line of major significance for our time. Both entities have a sense of their ancient origins - The Arab Muslim with the emergence of Islam into northern Africa in the 8th and 9th centuries, and the Nubian with their links to the Cush people of the Old Testament, the Christian origins in Acts with

Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian, and the emergence of the Nubian Christian culture in the 5th through the 16th centuries. A similar fault line in recent weeks is in the news in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

Having lived now this last month of March in the presence of Bishop Andudu, I have been moved deeply, again, by the reality of the paradox of strength in weakness and Life from the far side of death. Here we have a people of faith who through centuries of persecution and near annihilation have nothing, yet have a joyful and living faith in the approaching nearness of the Lord.

My hunch is that the persecuted church, like that in the Kadugli-Nuba Diocese, is of great importance to the church in the developed world. The persecuted church bears witness and offers to us Gospel insights thrusting forward "unto the ends of the earth."

We have been blessed indeed by the presence of Bishop Andudu this March.

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