

ADAM'S STORY
Read in the April 24, 2005 Service
First Unitarian Church of Cincinnati

Adam lived in the Nuba Mountains of southern Sudan. He, his three brothers and two sisters and his parents farmed their land, growing grains, maize, potatoes and raising cows, sheep and goats. As a child, Adam went to a boarding school for six years, coming home every summer to work on the farm, but school was very expensive and so his education was cut short. It was difficult to get Adam's history about this period.

His first wife gave birth to a son on July 4, 1992 while they were still living on the farm. His second wife gave birth to a baby girl named in 1993.

In 1993 a war broke out between the government of Sudan and the rebels in the south. The government tried to recruit any person young or old to fight against the rebels and if you didn't join the government against the rebels, you would be killed. Adam didn't join with either side, but took his two wives and two babies and escaped the bombing and burning. When he returned to his parents' farm he found that they had been murdered and everything burned in their home and on the farm. He took his wives and the two babies, and after two days of walking arrived in Khor Deleb (between the Nuba Mountains and Khartoum). They spent the night with a friend but it was too dangerous for them to stay there, so in the middle of the night they fled to the capital city of Khartoum. When they got to Khartoum, they went to Jabrona, a refugee camp where Adam got a job in construction, building houses. While there, Adam's first wife gave birth to a daughter in 1994 and another daughter in 1996.

On January 1, 1998, six men wearing uniforms came to Adam's house and arrested him. They said he must be a rebel because he came from the Nuba Mountains. They took him to jail, where they interrogated him and tortured him to try to find out whom he knew and who was a rebel. He was in jail for nine months, always tortured and always interrogated. The government failed to get any evidence or information from Adam, so with some lawyers who helped him, he was released on September 11, 1998. When he got out of prison, Adam divorced his first wife. She was an alcoholic and was unable to care for their children while he was in prison. Adam and his second wife assumed full custody of the children.

The government told Adam that he must not leave Khartoum and that he would have to report to the government office twice every week. He obeyed their rules and reported to them every Tuesday and Thursday for a year and a half.

In 2000 Adam, his wife and three children escaped from Khartoum, up the Nile on a steamer (overnight) to Cairo, Egypt. (They had to leave one daughter behind because she didn't have papers to leave the country. They left her with her aunt. It must have been a difficult decision to leave the child behind. They still keep in contact with her by telephone.) When they arrived in Cairo, they told a priest there that their lives were in danger and asked him to make them new documents so they could live safely in Cairo. He did that in secret for them. Adam didn't know anyone in Egypt and didn't know where he and his family would stay, but they went to a church near the port and by evening M. came and got the family. He had heard that a fellow Nuba Mountain family had arrived by boat, nothing more, and he took them in. Adam, his wife and the three

children lived with M. and his wife until they could get an apartment of their own. Adam and his wife worked cleaning the apartment buildings where they lived. The children went to school for one year where their lessons were taught in Arabic and English. Adam went to evening classes in Cairo to learn English. They lived there for 2½ years.

In 2003 the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees decided Adam was a legitimate refugee and allowed him and his family to come to the U.S. They came to Cincinnati because M. lived here, and he had requested through Catholic Social Services that Adam's family be located here.

Adam and his wife live in the Tri State area with their son and their two school age daughters. They now have a baby girl age 3 months. The children are doing well at their neighborhood school and the three older children are involved in soccer. Many volunteers from First Church have helped the family with everything from helping Adam and his wife find housing and jobs, to tutoring, transportation, helping with their many medical needs. First Church was very generous at Christmas and when the new baby was expected. Adam now works at a meat processing company. His wife is now looking for housekeeping work where she could take the baby with her.

Several other families from Sudan live in the same apartment complex and nearby. They help each other out with childcare and community meals, in the tradition of the Sudanese culture. They have much to teach us about the true meaning of community.