

STTC Newsletter - December 2025

Solidarity Teacher Training College, Yambio, South Sudan



In loving Memory of Brother Bill Firman, De La Salle Brother

By Fr. Jim Greene, MAfr, Former Executive Director

"With heavy hearts we share the news of the passing of Br Bill, a dedicated and cherished founding member of Solidarity with South Sudan (SwSS).

I lived with Br Bill in Juba for about two months in 2019. Only afterwards did I realize that this was a very difficult time for him, saying goodbye to his beloved Solidarity and to South Sudan. Br Bill was a cornerstone of Solidarity with South Sudan. He will be deeply missed and remembered for his profound generosity, his passionate commitment and his steadfast attention to the needy: his dedication and life were a testament to compassion and service. His spirit and dedication will continue to inspire all at SwSS.

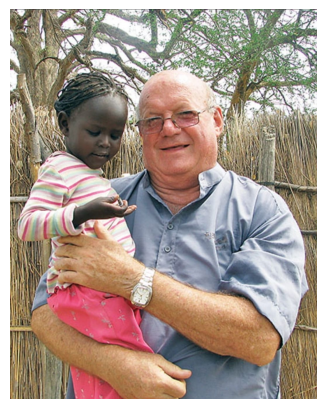
He invested a huge amount of his energy, creativity and especially his heart in his adopted country. I am sure he carried cherished memories of his time back to Melbourne but he also left many memories behind. Around our neighborhood in Juba, he was fondly remembered because of his huge generosity. He also helped countless priests, religious and lay people throughout the country. That, in itself, is a huge legacy but for Br Bill it was only a sideline.

His day job was to establish the structures of a fledgling Solidarity. This was nowhere more obvious than in the classrooms and library that he built in **Solidarity Teacher Training College** in **Yambio**. He oversaw developments in other projects too, but as an educationalist, the teacher training college had a special place in his heart.

He steered Solidarity during some difficult periods of national history. The teacher training college in Malakal found itself in the cross hairs of a murderous civil war. Br Bill assisted in supporting our trapped members there in evacuation and in maintaining morale in all our projects during this frightening period. He also assisted our people in Yambio in the aftermath of a traumatic attack on our community and college. The list could go on, but you get the picture.

Br Bill was an exceptionally generous, creative and determined brother and leader. We will always be grateful for the gift the De La Salle Congregation gave to Solidarity and to South Sudan.

In his passing, we honour his life, his achievements, and above all, his passion for Solidarity and for South Sudan. May he rest in peace."





Recollection Day

In preparation for Christmas, students and staff spent Saturday 13 Dec. 2025 as a day of recollection. Our spiritual director was Fr Felix Anand Assisi (Peace Makers of Christ). He gave several sessions across the day, concluding with the Vigil Mass for the 3rd Sunday of Advent. It was a special day, a complete break from routine and work, with the opportunity for confession as well as quiet time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The wholehearted engagement of the students was impressive. We face into Christmas with renewed fervour.



Oxford Learner's Dictionary

The Year 2 students each received their own copy of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* on 24 November and were quick to cover it neatly with heavy paper and inscribe their names. Br Francis took time to teach dictionary skills with the students, followed by classes with Madam Laker and finally Sr Jacinta, so that students can make full use of this treasure. Equipped with this dictionary, even if nothing else is available to them, good teaching can happen, as our students will demonstrate over the coming months.



Stay awake, be ready! The Lord is coming soon

Blessings on our students, staff and generous friends and supporters in these last days of Advent. May the coming of the Christ-child, the prince of peace, move the hearts of all towards dialogue, empathy, and peace-making, especially here in the dioceses of Sudan and South Sudan that are suffering so much right now. Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth!



Inservice One Examinations

The Inservice Year 1 programme (afternoons) starts a little earlier and extends for a few weeks longer than that of Preservice to ensure that both Certificate groups cover the same material and reach the same high standard within two calendar years. The current Inservice 1 group rose to the challenge of their end-of-year exams with remarkable cheerfulness from 20-28 November, under the eagle eye of Mr Angelo Makur. They are now enjoying a well-earned break with their families. Year 2 for Inservice opens with a fortnight of full-time classes on 12 January 2026, with afternoon classes from 2 February.



Preservice Year 2 underway

The Preservice Certificate students will complete week 6 of Year 2 before Christmas, and resume full classes on 5 Jan. 2026. They are currently struggling with Romeo and Juliet (named on the Primary School curriculum, for P7), which of course has a very appealing story line. Following a BBC radio performance line-by-line does help with understanding, building on the good classroom work with Madam Laker Eunice. The puppets they have started making with Sr Jacinta will be used in classroom drama, but not quite as lofty as Shakespeare.



Safeguarding Audit

A Safeguarding risk assessment of STTC Yambio was undertaken by Dr Johnny Saverio on behalf of the board of Solidarity with South Sudan, from 2 to 4 December 2025. Dr Johnny held a series of meetings with student groups (men, women, mixed men and women), with Solidarity members and with staff (tutors, supporting staff, unclassified staff), to determine what they really knew of the Solidarity Safeguarding policy, and what aspects of the policy and its implementation might need to be improved. STTC takes Safeguarding very seriously, as Dr Johnny found out at first hand.

Inservice Year 1 enroute

The PS Year 2 helped the tutors to create a 'welcome day' on Mon. 15 December for the Inservice students who will start their Certificate programme in January. The recruitment officer, Mr Kirya Julius, was anxious to connect with those Inservice candidates who have been successful in their application and to encourage them to take up this golden opportunity. It was a pleasure to meet properly those we had interviewed some months back and to rekindle their enthusiasm for learning. A total of 18 Inservice students arrived for the welcome, including three headteachers; a few more are expected. We look forward very much to starting with this new group.



Super-strong new beds

A large number of new students are expected shortly, requiring a major expenditure on additional beds. These iron bunk beds are manufactured locally by Mr Allann Kayiwa. Sixty-six new beds have been installed (33 sets), with new mattresses, a vote of confidence in our recruitment efforts. The male students are ready, as always, to move heavy furniture, but praise must be directed, to those who manufactured these quality beds, to Flora and James who prepared the dormitories for their arrival, and to Sr Elizabeth Blok, who manages the countless things required to make this residential college function well.

News from Inservice Wau

Sr Dolores Alphonso and the Inservice students at Wau sent this note to acknowledge receipt of the first books for the Inservice Library, as well as a printer. These books are a follow-up from the library training delivered by Madam Thecla Carleton earlier this year in Yambio, and we thank Thecla and her family for this extension of their interest in STTC.

"This is a warm recognition of your kindness towards us, teacher trainees at Inservice Wau. We are indeed delighted to see such beautiful books. We look forward to learning from them and improving our skills in the teaching learning process. We are grateful and we appreciate your generous and thoughtful kindness. Thank you for being partners with us in our struggle for Nation building through quality education. May God bless You. Trainees and Staff. STTC Inservice Wau"



SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH SUDAN - ROME EVENTS 2025

Pilgrims of Hope in South Sudan

On 3 December 2025, the event Pilgrims of Hope in South Sudan concluded successfully at the Jesuit General Curia in Rome, organized by Solidarity with South Sudan. More than 70 participants attended, including the Ambassadors to the Holy See from the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as representatives of various religious congregations.

The day of discussion, supported and promoted by the Unions of Superiors General (UISG and USG) together with the Embassies of Ireland and the United Kingdom to the Holy See, was enriched by contributions from distinguished guests such as Her Excellency Frances Collins (Ambassador of Ireland to the Holy See), His Excellency Chris Trott (British Ambassador), and His Eminence Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime.

The gathering reaffirmed the crucial role of inter-congregational collaboration in fostering hope and peace in South Sudan. Speakers particularly highlighted and expressed gratitude for the selfless dedication of religious missionaries from diverse congregations worldwide, recognizing their invaluable service to the people of South Sudan.



General Assembly of Solidarity with South Sudan

On 4 December 2025, the Annual General Assembly (AGA) of Solidarity with South Sudan for the year 2025 was held at De La Salle Generalate in Rome. This important event brought together more than 50 religious men and women from different Congregations for an intense day of reflection and planning.

The work focused on the progress of the mission, with the presentation of the report by some members of the Board who visited the communities in South Sudan last February, updates from the new Executive Director, Father Hyacithe Loua, SJ, and the detailed report from the Finance Committee on the financial status and budget.

The last part of the meeting was dedicated to the election of three new Board members. We warmly welcome to the Solidarity family:

- Avril Keely, Holy Faith Sisters
- Martin Davakan, Order of Saint Augustine
- Judith Routier, Faithful Companion of Jesus

At the same time, we warmly greet and thank Sister Katherine O'Flynn, FCJ, who is concluding her term after serving as a member of the Board on several occasions, supporting the mission with commitment and deep dedication. The Assembly concluded by reaffirming the collective commitment to an Inter-Congregational approach to the Mission, which continues to be a beacon of hope in South Sudan.