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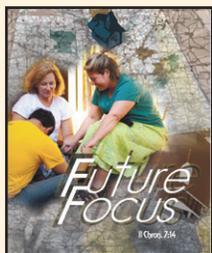
Alabama's Christian job corps volunteerism, giving on the rise

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'Living Water'

Birmingham's Dawson helps Sudanese village

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, has taken a costly new step in its nine-year commitment to the South Sudanese village of Akot.

On Oct. 7 the church voted to enter a five-year partnership with Living Water Community Transformation (LWCT), a 501(c)(3) organization founded to minister to the approximately 12,000-member community in Sudan. Dawson will provide \$500,000 over the coming years to help build and operate two primary schools, train pastors and provide work for women in the area. In addition the church will continue to send specialized missions teams into Akot.

Planting seeds

Those specialized short-term missions trips actually were the seed of Dawson's commitment to the village. In 2003, Southern Baptist representatives in the region near Akot invited American teams to do missions work there. The need then was massive: extreme poverty, damage from the Second Sudanese Civil War and an almost complete lack of children's education, employment opportunities and health care. The first missions teams into Akot set up medical clinics in the bush and conducted evangelism. Ongoing trips led to the creation of the Akot Medical Mission,

a medical facility still in operation today.

After the Southern Baptist representatives left the region, Dawson — in partnership with several other churches — formed LWCT to keep working in the area.

LWCT has founded two primary schools that meet under trees and grass-roof shelters. About 650 students — 90 of whom are orphans — are taught between the two schools. LWCT also has created a training center to raise pastors for the 14 Baptist churches in the area, facilitated the drilling of several water wells and employed Sudanese women in a vocational sewing center.

Grants from organizations like Baptist Global Response have provided vaccinations for the schoolchildren and a daily nutritious meal — the only meal that some of them eat in a day. Several young adults also are receiving scholarships for secondary or college-level classes.



Photo courtesy of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church
Lunches funded by Baptist Global Response are prepared and served every day at Living Water Primary School in South Sudan.



Photo courtesy of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church

A student at Living Water Primary School drinks from a community well on the school grounds in South Sudan.

Ben Hale, minister of missions and evangelism at Dawson, spoke of the responsibility the church is taking for the Akot region.

"God called us to Akot originally and seems to be leading us to a deeper level of commitment," he said.

"We now know the names and circumstances of many of our Christian

brothers and sisters in South Sudan."

Because LWCT is not an independently funded group, it is in serious need of financial assistance from Dawson and from others.

"If we do not build and fund the schools in Akot, the children will not be educated. If we do not give and go to Akot, the women will very likely be left to fend for themselves. If we do not give and go to Akot, the pastors' training will very likely cease," Hale said.

Hale and the leadership of Dawson hope that this partnership "will provide ... a renewed sense of responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission," he said. "As this personalization of missions increases ... we anticipate that God will continually call us to a better understanding of what it means to be found faithful as His people."

For more information on how to get involved in serving the people of Akot, contact Ann Rao at arao1@tampabay.rr.com or Ben Hale at bhale@dawsonchurch.org. For more information about LWCT, visit livingwaterct.org. (Dawson, Joseph Rhea contributed)