

St. Francis and Ezo, South Sudan (March 2025)

In the mid-1990s, St. Francis became involved with the Diocese of Ezo in Sudan (just “Sudan” in those days) through our associate rector, who had done relief work in that area of the world. In 1998, St. Francis signed a covenant with the Ezo Diocese, promising to pray for and offer other support for the people of Ezo.

After years of civil war, South Sudan became the newest country in the world in 2011. But the strife was not over in Ezo, where the Lord’s Resistance Army (the LRA), a terrorist group, wreaked havoc for years. Villages were burned to the ground, people were kidnapped or murdered, and livelihoods were lost. Once the LRA was gone, the people still had to deal with tribal warfare and with a new government where corruption was (and is) rampant.

In 2021, a new bishop, the Right Rev. Isaac Bangisa, was elected to be the Episcopal Bishop of Ezo. Bishop Isaac brought a new energy to Ezo. Drawing on his experience from working at World Vision, he and his staff developed a 5-year plan for Ezo that focuses on building self-reliance and sustainability. It’s a big job in an area where the Episcopal Church is the institution that provides schools, health care, and social services to thousands of people.

All through the turmoil of Ezo, St. Francis has sought to live out its covenant with Ezo by supporting the Diocese and its people when possible and by praying for them daily.

2021: St. Francis sent close to \$20,000 (raised at the previous year’s church Gala) to repair a water well on the Ezo Diocese compound, as well as to drill a new well outside the Masumbu Primary School to provide clean water to families.



2022: St. Francis sent funds to help support the schools of Ezo, which are run by the church. Much of the money was used for feeding the children. The Masumbu Primary School, one of several that the church runs in Ezo, has more than 700 students. **Also in 2022**, St. Francis sent funds to help feed the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from neighboring areas who ended up as refugees in Ezo after warfare.



2023: St. Francis held its first “Ezo Sunday” during Lent and kicked off a fundraiser to provide bicycles for about 3 dozen clergy in Ezo. Before they received their bicycles, the clergy throughout the diocese walked many miles while serving their parishes. Some of the money raised was also used to help volunteers build a guesthouse for the Diocese. **Also in 2023,** St. Francis sent funds to support Ezo’s first Peace Event, which brought together tribes that had been at war.



2024: St. Francis raised funds for building supplies and tools that helped the Ezo Diocese build a community center for meetings. In addition, some private donations for Ezo allowed St. Francis to send \$13,000 for the bishop to purchase a 1999 Nissan Patrol, which has greatly increased his ability to get around the very large diocese, as well as to get to Juba. Having a vehicle is a rarity in this area. Finally, St. Francis also sent funds to support Bishop Isaac’s **2024 Peace Event**, which drew more than 3,000 people, including government officials, officials from the Episcopal church and other churches, community leaders, the Mothers’ Union, and more. Tribal warfare has displaced more than 85,000 people near Ezo, and these peace events have helped to broker peace and bring more people to Christianity.

What’s Happening in 2025?

BIG, BIG news! St. Francis has invited Bishop Isaac and Mama Nora to visit us in 2026. They are tentatively planning to come in early March of that year and to be with us for two weeks. There are some obstacles to be overcome, for instance, they will need to get visas, which can be difficult, and St. Francis will need to raise the funds for their travel, which will be expensive.

However, all of that should be manageable.



Scott Perkins has agreed to lead this effort. Scott and his committee will be securing housing for the Bishop and his wife, as well as speaking opportunities for the Bishop and other connections that could be useful.

If you are interested in working on this committee and/or helping with the visit, please contact Scott at ohio4csp@hotmail.com.

If you are interested in being part of the Ezo Committee, which meets irregularly (often via Zoom), contact Jack Mathias at Jackmathi@aol.com. Jack corresponds with Bishop Isaac on a regular basis and generally has the latest news from Ezo.