

AFRECS E-Blast: December 18, 2013

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

**In the church:**

**A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins**

Dear Friends,

As we experience this blessed season of Advent, we are called to actively wait for coming of our Lord. The theme of expectation is paramount in many of the meditations of the season - expectation of something wonderful and improbable in the arrival of the Messiah. We are invited to prepare ourselves to receive a savior and to be messengers of hope, peace, and reconciliation in His name.

This past week we celebrated the life of Nelson Mandela, the South African liberator whose leadership brought an end to apartheid without the violence and bloodshed that might have resulted if Mandela had not made peace and reconciliation the basis of his leadership. What might have seemed unlikely and impossible became probable and real.

Reflecting on both Advent and the life of Nelson Mandela leads to some thoughts about events in Sudan and South Sudan. Do we dare expect peace and reconciliation to triumph in Jonglei, Darfur, Abyei, and the areas of the Nuba Mountains? Moreover, do those who experience unremitting violence in these various regions have good reason to expect peace and safety as near term realities? We are called to believe that with God's help, our patient but persistent advocacy can make a difference. It happened in South Africa and it happened centuries ago with the coming of the Messiah at a very difficult time in the history of that far-off place.

It may be a struggle to remain hopeful for a good outcome for our threatened Sudanese sisters and brothers. It is no doubt a greater struggle for those whose lives are surrounded by unmitigated violence of which the outside world seems unaware or, more tragically, indifferent. May our hopefulness and vociferous advocacy inject a bit of hope into the lives of those who have good reason not be hopeful. May we pray for leaders who are messengers of hope, peace and reconciliation.

Faithfully,  
Richard Parkins

## **A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins Regarding Recent Events in South Sudan**

Dear Friends,

It is sad that at this holy season we are learning of more instability and violence in South Sudan. We have included updates on that crisis in this eblast. Obviously, our prayers must be that peace comes quickly and decisively to this country which has had a history of violence and suffering. It is ironic and tragic that this upheaval occurs as we are still reflecting on the life and work of Nelson Mandela and focusing on peace as the special message of this season of our life as Christians. Let peace prevail.

Richard Parkins

### **Hot Off the Press: News from the Episcopal Church in the Nuba Mountains**

The December 2013 issue of [Tabaldi](#), the newsletter of the Diocese of Kadugli, went online today in both [English](#) and [Arabic](#). When so much of our news about the suffering people of the Nuba Mountains comes from satellites and the government or SPLM-N, it is a great joy to get news directly from the region's Christians.

Speaking of the dioceses of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan, keep in mind that each diocese has a website, available from [this page](#) of the ECSSS site.

### **Ellen's Juba Journey**

AFRECS board member the Rev. Ellen Hanckel has returned to the US after a semester of teaching at Bishop Gwynne College in Juba. Today she posted a [new message](#) about the time she spent there on her blog. Ellen will be back at the eblast editor's desk as of the next issue.

### **Blogging from Renk**

Noah Hillerbrand, a recent high school graduate from the Diocese of Chicago, is blogging his time in Renk Diocese at BE-Renk, the name he's given his work there. He posted [yesterday](#), and you can find previous posts linked from the sidebar if you need to catch up.

### **Archbishop Daniel's Role in Peace and Reconciliation**

The Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation, chaired by Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul, held a retreat to discuss their progress and plans. The Sudan Tribune has their [report](#).

## **An Appeal from AFRECS**

Dear Friends of AFRECS,

As we approach the end of 2013 and enter into the Christmas season, I trust that you will offer prayers for peace and tranquility for South Sudan and an end to the violence that plagues so many conflict ridden regions of both Sudans. Let us be among those blessed peacemakers.

I would hope that you might also consider an end-of-the-year gift to AFRECS. This past year we supported community health education with special attention to using the women of the Mothers' Union as purveyors of community health education. We offered financial support to Bishop Andudu Elnail as he ministers to those violently displaced from the Nuba Mountains and seeks to recruit and train priests to meet their spiritual needs. We helped Bishop Gwynne College avert a financial crisis as it seeks to be a leading source of theological education in South Sudan. We have helped underwrite the peacekeeping work of Archbishop Daniel as he leads a peace and reconciliation effort in the troubled region of Jonglei.

All of this is possible because of your generosity. I now ask you to again express that generosity with a donation to AFRECS as we plan ways in which we can bolster peace and development in the coming year, even as crises persist in so many parts of South Sudan. We believe that uncertainty makes our presence all the more urgent. Help us to be that presence.

Continue your fervent prayers that those in both South Sudan and Sudan will find a pathway to peace, reconciliation, and security. With your gifts, help us to build that pathway.

Faithfully in Christ,

Richard Parkins  
Executive Director

**P.S.** All contributions to AFRECS are tax deductible. Contributions can be made online; see our website: <http://afreecs.org/getInvolved.htm>. Contributions can also be sent to AFRECS, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304.

### **In politics -- South Sudan:**

#### **Violence in Juba and Beyond**

Shooting has been occurring in Juba over the past few days in what **President Salva Kiir** called a [coup attempt](#) by supporters of former Vice President Riek Machar. Kiir gave a press conference Monday; see the [video](#) or read the [text](#). **Radio Dabanga** reports that former minister of higher education says that the [uprising](#) was not a coup attempt at all but rather a mutiny in response to President Kiir's order to disarm the Nuer soldiers in the presidential guard. For his

part, Riek Machar [denied](#) the accusations of a coup on his behalf; the [BBC](#) has that story as well as [a summary](#) of the situation as of Tuesday morning, and [Voice of America](#) talked with State Department officials including Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan Donald Booth for the [US perspective](#). [Martin Plaut](#) published [background](#) to the crisis on his blog. A UN peacekeeping official reported to the Security Council that Juba hospitals had received 400-500 dead and another 800 wounded since the shooting began, and some 15,000 have sought refuge at UN compounds in the Juba area. The US suspended embassy operations and planned to start [evacuating](#) some personnel today. Uganda [closed its border](#) with South Sudan, but has now reopened it; they have increased their troops along the border, though. Fighting had also [spread to Bor](#) by Tuesday, and [Al-Jazeera English](#) reported [Wednesday](#) that more fighting occurred in Jonglei, Nuer army leaders deserted, and some 1000 fled to a UN compound for refuge, while things were calmer in Juba despite a few more shots heard overnight. According to a BBC story late today, fighting has also [spread to Torit](#) in Eastern Equatoria, and Ban Ki-moon is deeply concerned about the situation.

The [Greater Bor Community](#) in the United States has published an [open letter](#) to President Kiir and former Vice President Machar.

The [Government of South Sudan](#) tweeted this today: "H.E. Kiir is open to dialogue with Dr. Riek to end fighting caused by attempted coup & restore peace & security to people of #SouthSudan," but "10 people have been arrested in connection with failed coup attempt against @RepSouthSudan, the democratically elected Gov of #SouthSudan"; those arrested are: Oyay Deng Ajak, Geir Chuang Aloung, Majak D' Agot, John Luk Jok, Cirino Hiteng, Chol Tong Mayay, Izekeil Lul Gatkouth... .. Deng Alor Koul, Madut Biar & Kosti Manibe"; "Those who are still at large will be apprehended." They also tweeted a request for citizens to donate blood for victims of the fighting and noted the crisis conditions in local hospitals.

The [US Mission in South Sudan](#) tweeted this today: "Airport in #Juba is open tomorrow (Thurs) for commercial flights, 9am-5pm. "

[Trevor Stubbs](#) has posted several communications about the situation from church leaders on his [blog](#), including the full joint statement of South Sudan's [church leaders](#).

[The Sudan Link](#) tweeted this Wednesday evening (Juba time, still morning in America) -- note the mention of violence in Unity State, which hasn't gotten much if any other mention: "Please pray for friends in #SouthSudan; #Juba seems calm this evening but pray for #Jonglei & #Unity states where clashes have taken place."

[Episcopal Relief & Development](#) tweeted today as well: "Please #pray for all those affected by the outbreak of violence in #SouthSudan" and provided a link to the [Huffington Post summary](#) of the crisis.

The [United Nations Security Council](#) has [urged](#) a cessation of hostilities and the exercise of restraint.

John Ashworth weighed in on the situation with [citations](#) of a few stories and a well-tempered comment on not fueling what seem to be mostly unsubstantiated rumors and explanations of what's happening in South Sudan.

### **Failures of Government and Accumulation of Debt**

The Sudd Institute has published a [new report](#) on the failures of government and the accumulation of debt in South Sudan since its independence.

### **In politics -- Sudan:**

#### **Sudan and the West**

Sudan is [refusing](#) to continue business as usual with US Special Envoy Donald Booth, insisting that he will be received only if the agenda revolves around lifting of sanctions and other pressing concerns of the state. In contrast, the Netherlands plans to provide Sudan about \$200 million in debt relief (with some conditions), and Eric Reeves explains why [they shouldn't](#) for the Enough blog.

#### **President Bashir Reassigns Cabinet Leaders**

An ongoing story over the past couple of weeks has been the upheaval in government positions in Sudan. The reassignment of cabinet roles was announced, and long-time Vice President Taha [resigned](#) in advance of the cabinet reshuffle. The [new cabinet](#) was announced, and [President Al-Bashir](#) said making the choices was not easy, but he planned to reassign [state governors](#) too. *The Economist's* Intelligence Unit explained the changes and considered their [meaning](#). Then President Bashir appointed a new [central bank governor](#). Finally, the NCP announced that it has a [plan](#) for comprehensive political reform which may be implemented within the next two weeks.

#### **Human Rights in Sudan**

Act for Sudan, a human rights organization, has [criticized](#) President Obama for taking too soft a stance on genocide in Sudan and issued a [press release](#) on the topic on Tuesday December 10, Human Rights Day.

#### **Attacks in Blue Nile and South Kordofan**

As promised, the Sudanese government has intensified its efforts to crush the rebels in its southern tier of states. Blue Nile has seen [fighting](#) in the past week, and fighting there has caused [thousands](#) to flee. The Enough Project has posted a [humanitarian needs assessment](#) for Blue Nile and a [blog post](#) entitled "Living Under Siege in Blue Nile."

As in Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains are experienced reintensified fighting (as [documented](#) by the Satellite Sentinel Project and Enough). Saturday saw several people injured as the SPLM-N [shelled](#) Kadugli (their targets are military assets, they say), and the Sudanese army fired back. Reliefweb summarizes the Small Arms Survey's [recent study](#) of the crisis in Blue Nile.

## **In politics -- the two Sudans:**

### **Abyei: A Special Request for Advocacy**

The SPLM-USA National Secretariat seeks support and advocacy for the US government and international entities to recognize the October referendum of the people of Abyei to join the nation of South Sudan. [Read their appeal](#) and find a sample advocacy letter on the AFRECS website.

### **Cooperation Behind the Scenes**

In a [single article](#), the *Sudan Tribune* reported that some prominent people in South Sudan have asked Hassan al-Turabi, the leader of Sudan's opposition Popular Congress Party, to mediate between President Kiir and the ruling SPLM party and that the Communist Party of Sudan and the Communist Party of South Sudan recently held a joint meeting in Khartoum.

### **Malaria**

US Secretary of State John Kerry [blogged](#) about the importance of ending malaria, a topic of special relevance in the Sudans.

**PRAY:** Pray for an end to the internal political strife and violence in South Sudan, for a just peace and reconciliation among those in conflict, and for security for all who live and work in Juba and all parts of the nation. Please continue to pray likewise for the people of Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan and all others living with conflict and insecurity in Sudan.

**URGE:** Please read the [appeal](#) from the SPLM-USA Secretariat regarding the Abyei referendum and consider taking the steps they request to bring about recognition of the referendum's results. And please consider a year-end [donation](#) to AFRECS to support the work of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan.