

AFRECS E-Blast: December 20, 2011

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

In the church:

Some Good News: A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins

For many who have shared the journey to the emergence of the Republic of South Sudan, it was heartening this past week to witness a host of senior officials from the new nation, including its President, speak confidently about the future of their country. I know that many who can hearken back to a time when our contacts with Sudan were primarily with uprooted and displaced Sudanese, often in refugee camps awaiting resettlement or repatriation, or involved a treacherous journey through southern Sudan, the prospect of an independent and confident South Sudan was hardly within view. For some, a free South Sudan may have seemed like a virtual impossibility.

Last week in Washington at a conference sponsored by USAID and the Government of South Sudan, what was remote became real. Sudanese leaders offered clear and carefully articulated plans for a future that included investments in both vital services for the Sudanese people and a badly needed infrastructure that would spur development and economic progress. These pronouncements were responded to by words of encouragement and support from Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, UN Ambassador Susan Rice, and US AID Administrator Rajiv Shah. These official messages were augmented with countless endorsements from NGOs and potential US investors who were urged to look favorably at South Sudan's investment possibilities.

This milestone conference included an awareness that the challenges and impediments were many. There was the obvious deep concern that the raging war instigated by the Khartoum government would frustrate and could derail South Sudan's future as a peaceful and stable nation. However, the spirit of optimism and hopefulness was inspiring to one who recalls that the emphasis of twenty years ago was on the survival of the South Sudanese people and the urgency of creating awareness of a catastrophic humanitarian crisis that was not nearly as widely understood as the depth of the crisis warranted. As we pray that the horrific crisis of the past not once again overwhelm Sudan, let us give thanks for the gains that South Sudan has made and the hopes that its leaders have that more progress lies ahead. In this season of hope, let us be reminded of this achievement. Also, as we welcome again the birth of the Prince of Peace, let us also pray that a reign of peace might be poured out on all of Sudan.

Let's Help Larry Duffee Stay in Juba -- More from Richard Parkins

Dear Friends,

Recently I was able to witness the outstanding work done by Larry Duffee at a meeting of the General Synod of the Episcopal Church of Sudan, where Larry's work in supporting the ECS and its provincial office was very much in evidence. The clarity and completeness of financial reports was greatly appreciated by all, and the excellent work of a new accountant in the provincial office speaks to Larry's efforts in recruiting and training a highly competent replacement. In countless ways, Larry's tireless and patient attention to making the provincial office a well-functioning organization and thus more able to support the work of the ECS was apparent. With another six months to improve systems and train staff, these significant accomplishments can be confirmed and enhanced. Your financial support of this dedicated volunteer in mission will be a gift that will keep on giving as we all experience a stronger provincial office better able to serve our sisters and brothers who depend so much on their church and its staff. Please be generous. (Checks can be sent to [AFRECS](#) with a memo line indicating your intentions.)

Richard Parkins, AFREC Executive Director

Hope for Humanity

Hope for Humanity, a Richmond-based, Episcopal Church-connected charity that has built and is sustaining a school in South Sudan, has a new [newsletter](#).

E-Blast Holiday

There won't be an eblast next week, December 27th, as we take a Christmas holiday. We'll be back January 3rd. The board and staff of AFRECS wish our members and friends a blessed Christmas and a happy new year.

The Archbishop's Letter

Several blogs have published a [letter](#) from Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul, disinviting Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori from a hypothetical visit to the Province of the Episcopal Church of Sudan. Both ECS and TEC have confirmed that the letter was sent and received. Neither the Episcopal Church of Sudan nor the office of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church has commented definitively on its implications. Honoring all our ecclesial relationships, the members of the AFRECS board are seeking further conversations with both parties before responding, but initial communications with the Archbishop's office suggest that the letter was not meant to end partnerships between the ECS and the Episcopal Church but rather to reiterate the stance of the ECS against certain actions and beliefs in TEC, and to affirm additional partners. The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Lee of Chicago posted a moving [statement](#) about the

letter and Chicago's partnership with the Diocese of Renk, which has been cross-posted on the websites of Episcopal Cafe and several other dioceses with partners in the ECS.

Archbishop Daniel's Report from Jonglei State

Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul again led a peacemaking contingent to Jonglei State on behalf of the Sudan Council of Churches. See his [report](#) for a full account.

In politics -- Sudan:

The Fighting Continues

Reuters has published an [account](#) of the **fighting in Blue Nile** based on interviews with refugees at **Doro camp** in Upper Nile, and Radio Dabanga has a [story](#) on the bombing in Blue Nile and South Sudan's Upper Nile, just across the border, last week. ISPI has an [analysis](#) of the **complexities of the conflicts** in Sudan. The **latest abuse** on the part of Khartoum is forced [conscription](#) of South Sudanese citizens living in Sudan into the Sudan Armed Forces.

In politics -- South Sudan:

Death of Renegade General George Athor Claimed

The Government of South Sudan announced today on its [website](#) that General George Athor, responsible for much of the turmoil in Jonglei State since he lost the election for governor there, was killed yesterday in fighting with the SPLA in Central Equatoria State as he moved north from Rwanda on a recruiting drive for his rebel group. (The [SudanTribune](#), [Radio Miraya](#), and the [BBC](#) are all reporting Athor's death, but as we prepare this news digest, all are hedging their reports with quotation marks around the word 'killed' or some other way of saying that the death has not been confirmed by their own sources.)

Refugees and Displaced Persons in South Sudan

Refugees International has a [comprehensive field report](#) on the refugee/IDP situation in South Sudan. Tens of thousands of refugees have already flooded from **South Kordofan**(Sudan) into Unity State (South Sudan) and from **Blue Nile** (Sudan) into Upper Nile (South Sudan), in the latter case at a rate of [1000 a day](#), according to one UN source (IRIN), while the UNHCR [estimates](#) a slightly lower 700+ a day. It's difficult to say whether those fleeing the **Abyei** area into various parts of South Sudan are refugees or internally displaced persons, given the unsettled status of Abyei, but around 100,000 are displaced, and the food situation is desperate. VOA is [reporting](#) that **Amnesty International** says the **UN** did nothing to protect civilians in the Abyei area this year. **Internal violence** in South Sudan has displaced some 330,000 people during 2011, and at least 350,000 **returnees** from Sudan have added to the situation, as these people are often stranded near the border with no means of moving into permanent homes in South Sudan. Providing shelter and sustenance to hundreds of thousands

of homeless people would be a humanitarian challenge in any event, but what Refugees International is calling '**poor donor readiness**' is exacerbating the problems of feeding and housing so many. Relief Web has [announced](#) that the UN has just begun a **major relief operation** to provide aid to 50,000 refugees in South Sudan, with planes taking off today from Kenya. Meanwhile, South Sudan is working to [expel undocumented foreign nationals](#).

More on International Engagement

Congressman Michael E. Capuano, the Co-Chair of the Sudan Caucus, has [blogged](#) about the recent **DC conference** on South Sudan, and the [remarks](#) of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are also available.

The Kenyan *East African* has a [synthesis](#) that chronicles the world's efforts to bring peace and stability to **East Africa**, with a focus on DR Congo, Somalia, and South Sudan.

Land Rights and Land Grabbing

The International Land Coalition has written a [synthesis](#) of land issues in the new Republic of South Sudan.

PRAY: We give thanks for the safe return to South Sudan of Bishop Joseph of Renk and Bishop Stephen and his wife Lillian of Lui. We ask your prayers for the ECS, for all its leaders and people, and for all the people of Sudan and South Sudan, that the coming year will see an end to the hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression that so overshadow the lives of so many in these two countries.

This weekly Sudan update is from the [American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan](#). You are receiving it because you are currently on an AFRECS listserv. Feel free to forward this newsflash to others who may find it helpful. To join the list if you received this email as a forward, please send an email to AFRECS_E-Blasts@afrecs.org with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. If you wish to unsubscribe, please send an email to AFRECS_E-Blasts@afrecs.org with "UNSUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. For more information about AFRECS, visit our website www.afrecs.org or our Facebook page.