

AFRECS E-Blast: December 4, 2014

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

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Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

The season of Advent is a time of waiting and hoping. As we await the birth of Christ, we also anticipate a time when we will be overwhelmed with the peace that accompanies the entry of Christ into the world. We get ready to welcome the prince of peace in a world where misery and oppression seem to abound. As we attempt to link the season of Advent with our hopes for an end of the conflict in South Sudan, is there a message here even as peace continues to appear illusive and remote?

As Christians, we are obliged to be hopeful. The Christian narrative is not without pain, confusion, disappointment, but it embraces an understanding that God accompanies us in our difficult times and shows us new possibilities where recovery and rebuilding are present. As the intransigence of the leaders in South Sudan continues to inflict devastation and suffering on thousands, grasping onto branches of hope seems futile unless we remember that some of these branches are strong and if we grasp them firmly, they can support us.

There is evidence in South Sudan, manifested in the tireless efforts of many, to find pathways to peace. We can take heart in knowing of several peace initiatives that speak not only to the resilience of the people of South Sudan but to their faithfulness that the God who has sustained them through decades of tragedy will not be absent from their lives even in the midst of the current devastation. While we wish that that these strands of hope for peace would be combined to make a large, single cloth, even unconnected efforts reflect a desire for a way forward that is free from violence and endless conflict. We give thanks for these signs of determined faithfulness.

Another aspect of Advent that we should note is the concept of active waiting. The reign of God includes the efforts of God's people to prepare themselves and their sisters and brothers to receive the Lord. Yes, we wait but not passively. We look to a better way of life while understanding that in our faithfulness we must watch for signs of God's presence. Let us hope that as Christ breaks through anew in our lives this Advent season, that same breaking forth will bring to their knees those who so callously resist peace. Let this be our Advent prayer.

Faithfully,
Richard Parkins

South Sudan

NY Times headline reads: [U.N. Extends Help for South Sudan](#). The resolution adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council, authorized the nearly 14,000-member [United Nations Mission in South Sudan](#) — an independent country since 2011 — through May. The extension came as the prospects for a peace agreement have been threatened repeatedly by cease-fire violations.

For a brief summary of the negotiations on the above resolution, read [What's in Blue, Insights on the work of the UN Security Council](#). Please note that In the last paragraph it refers to the peace talks in Ethiopia between the South Sudan government and the opposition. "On 7 November, the heads of state of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development issued a series of resolutions giving the government of South Sudan and the opposition 15 days to complete negotiations on a transitional government of national unity. This deadline has passed without the parties reaching an agreement."

[Gurtong published](#) the lecture given by Douglas H. Johnson at the Ghandi Peace Festival in Ontario Canada recently. It is well worth reading 'South Sudan's Experience in Peacemaking' for its insightful outlook and depth of knowledge.

Sudan

Keeping with their focus on the impact that the war continues to have on civilians, The Enough Project released two complementary reports recently, highlighting the dire humanitarian situation in South Kordofan.

In late November, *Enough, The Project to End Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*, published the results of [an in-depth humanitarian needs assessment](#) conducted in rebel-held parts of South Kordofan state. This assessment provides a picture of the widespread impact of the conflict on a variety of humanitarian indicators, including the nutritional status of children under five years of age. It also compares select statistics to a similar assessment conducted a year ago, and generates relevant information to inform targeted response strategies.

Akshaya Kumar, Sudan and South Sudan Policy Analyst for *Enough*, has written [a short brief](#) arguing that the desperate situation of the people in rebel-controlled areas, the Sudanese government's aid blockade, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, along with statements recently attributed to senior commanders in the government forces in documents leaked by Eric Reeves, lay the foundation for a case of crimes against humanity by extermination.

Thank you to our readers for your interest, your prayers, and your support.
Ellen J. Hanckel
Editor

Requests from the AFRECS Treasurer, Christy Hollywood

Renew your membership online at <http://www.afreecs.org/getInvolved.htm>.

Make an additional donation to support the Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan's efforts to provide solace and encourage reconciliation.

Encourage others to support AFRECS as well.

PRAY FOR PEACE AND DEEP HEALING OF THE CONFLICTS AND RIVALRIES IN SOUTH SUDAN.

PARTNER, URGE, GIVE

If you'd like to be doing more to help address the crisis in South Sudan, please consider the following:

* If you have contacts in South Sudan and are able to get news of various parts of the country and the church from them, keep AFRECS in the loop by replying to this email or using our main contact email address: info@afreecs.org.

* Pay attention to the evolving events and be prepared to advocate for peacemaking with the US (or other) government, especially if attention to conflict resolution wanes.

* Give to provide relief for internally displaced persons and others whose resources are compromised by the fighting and instability. One hundred percent of [donations to AFRECS](#) go to ECSS&S entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.