

AFRECS E-Blast: February 11, 2015

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

Do Something

Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Dear Friends,

It is tempting to be resigned to a state of despair as the conflict in South Sudan enters its second year. Several attempts at a cease fire have failed. The last effort holds forth a bit more promise but certainly we are not yet at the threshold of peace. Prayers continue as they must. There is, however, an option that all persons of faith might pursue: Do something to express the hopefulness that our Christian faith requires of us. Make a gesture that expresses a belief that tomorrow is not destined to be bleak and threatening for all. Do something that affirms there is a real prospect of a better future for South Sudan. Even as we advocate for peace, we have the additional challenge of making lives better for those in South Sudan whose desperation is intense and even for those whose lives are not now afflicted with endless war and strife.

There are an assortment of tasks and projects that might be considered. This litany is drawn from known situations that are being acted out in South Sudan currently.

- Schools are growing - some in places where there have never been schools and some where schools have been only minimally available to girls. Another school is being launched in a place where no school has existed previously. Now there will be a school there because committed villagers are building one with the generous help from Sudanese in the US and their American friends. Another young Sudanese person has written an account of his journey to America. He is using the proceeds from his book, along with funds collected from others, to build wells in his village. Now that clean water is readily available there, it makes it unnecessary for women to put themselves at risk by traveling some distance to obtain water.

Expressions of support take many forms. At least eleven dioceses in the US have nurtured companion connections with dioceses in South Sudan. The result of these relationships are schools and clinics, as well as training centers for much needed pastors. The generosity of an Episcopal diocese in the US will allow one of the areas most severely impacted by the war to make a major dent - relieving the suffering of thousands displaced when the war came. Other US companions are partnering in significant ways to make life better for their Sudanese sisters and brothers. The examples are limitless. People continue to embrace and enable a better future for their Sudanese friends. This list provides only a smattering of possibilities. The message here is that war does not nullify a chance for a better future when caring friends do their part. In addition, the friends show that they identify with God's abiding presence in the lives of all of his children.

As you agonize over the plight of our friends in South Sudan, think of something that you might do to make a positive change for some person or situation there. In so doing, you will help in a concrete way while tuning into the larger task of sending this counter message: There is a good chance that South Sudan will be restored and move toward the future that was hoped for when the nation became independent a few years ago. Be in touch with us if you want suggestions as to where that gesture of support might be expressed. The best antidote to the depression induced by war is to **"do something"**.

Faithfully,

Richard Parkins

P.S.

Dear Friends,

We are blessed to have received [Lenten reflections from our friends in the Diocese of Wau](#). Our brother in Christ, Bishop Moses Deng, encourages us to use these reflections in our Lenten devotions and to share this material widely. These are inspiring lessons for us not only for their uplifting spiritual content but for the connection that they give us to our sisters and brothers in South Sudan. Please use these and be blessed in the process. Please share them and thus the blessing that they bring to others.

Richard Parkins

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South Sudan

The Associated Press, reports from JUBA that rebels in South Sudan attacked government positions in two oil-producing states on Tuesday. The information, according to the country's defense minister, indicates that a truce signed only days ago is faltering, despite growing international calls for peace. Carried by [US News and World Report](#).

'Peace, stability and security' vital for South Sudan's war weary people, said top UN relief official, Valerie Amos, during a recent press conference in Juba. It followed a three day visit to the new nation made with Academy Award-winning actor and UNESCO Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker, in an effort to refocus global attention on the conflict-riven

country. Reported by [UN News Centre](#). Also posted by [Voice of America](#) and [OCHA](#).

[The Sudan Tribune](#) reports that the **US pledges \$273 million** for humanitarian assistance in South Sudan.

[UNICEF and partners are overseeing the release of another 300 children from an armed group in South Sudan](#). The children in Pibor, Jonglei State, surrendered their weapons and uniforms in a ceremony supported by UNICEF. The children will spend their first night in an interim care center where they will be provided with food, water and clothing. They will also have access to health and psychosocial services. This follows the release two weeks ago of 249 children aged between 11 and 17 years. Further phased releases of the other children from the armed group, Cobra, led by David Yau Yau will occur over the coming month in what is one of the largest ever demobilizations of children. Cobra has advised UNICEF that they have 3,000 children in their group.

“For every child released, it’s the chance for a new life,” said UNICEF South Sudan Representative Jonathan Veitch. “We are witnessing the negative consequences that being in an armed group has had on the boys; some are withdrawn while others exhibit violent and aggressive behavior. Instead of playing, they march up and down. To avoid the risk of re-recruitment and to ensure that each child can fulfill their potential, they need a protective environment where they not only receive food and water, but also counseling, life skills and the opportunity to go back to school,” said Veitch.

Sudan

[The Sudan Tribune](#) recently reported that a Darfur rebel group accused Qatar of supporting attacks carried out by the Sudanese government troops which displaced over 36,000 civilians in the western Sudan region, according to UN agencies...Qatar hosted a two-year process aiming to end Darfur conflict. Since the signing of Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, the oil and gas rich country is funding recovery and development projects in the western Sudan region...Last month a group of UN independent experts pointed that the troubled Darfur region may be “potentially fertile ground” for African jihadist groups in Africa.

Peter Dörrie reports on development, resources, international politics and security in Africa in [Sudan Is Arming Africa and No One Cares](#).

[Amnesty International](#) is urging the authorities in Sudan to disclose the whereabouts of two church leaders who were arrested by the country’s National Intelligence and Security Service in Khartoum last December and January. Both Reverend Yat Michael and Reverend Peter Yen – of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church – are being detained incommunicado, in an unknown location without access to their families or lawyers and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Thank you to our readers for your interest, your prayers, and your support.

We invite you to visit our Website: <http://www.afrecs.org/>

Ellen J. Hanckel

Editor

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

*Pray for peace and deep healing of the conflicts and rivalries in South Sudan.

*Join AFRECS or renew your annual membership on line

at <http://www.afrecs.org/getInvolved.htm>

* 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@afrecs.org.

* Be prepared to advocate for peacemaking with the US (or other) government, especially if attention to conflict resolution wanes.

*[Donate](#) to support the Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan's efforts to provide solace and encourage reconciliation.

*Urge others to support [AFRECS](#) as well.