

AFRECS E-Blast: February 12, 2014

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

Looking for a Way Forward: A Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins:

Consensus is emerging from various knowledgeable sources in South Sudan and from our global partners. We are hearing what steps are needed to help South Sudan move from conflict towards healing the resulting deep mistrust between tribal groups.

Peacemaking, reconciliation and healing are urgent priorities to be pursued if violence is to end with a return to a sustainable peace. While requiring a long range perspective, it is recognized that this task cannot be deferred. Many believe that the current conflict and the suffering that comes with it have intensified the residual mistrust which evidently existed previously. A protracted conflict makes the peace building task more difficult but also more urgent.

Recent messages from church leaders in South Sudan and information gathered in meetings which AFRECS held last week underscore the need for a inclusive peace process. Special Envoy, Donald Booth, at the Department of State and the South Sudan team at the US Agency for International Development gave voice to a common theme. While guided by religious leaders, the peace process must include all sectors of South Sudan society - women, youth, and local leaders. In short, what is called for is a peace process that is both comprehensive and inclusive.

In understanding this message, AFRECS has emphasized that resources are needed to translate the notion of a comprehensive and inclusive peace process into reality. Broad concepts provide the framework for going forward. Funds are needed to equip the peace process throughout the country with trained personnel who will convene groups to engage in dialogue and trust building exercises.

The Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church has called for a Day of Prayer for peace in South Sudan to take place this Sunday 2/16/14. ([See letter here](#)). The [Presbyterian Church USA](#) and the [Reformed Church of America](#) have joined this call. Hopefully, it will launch an ecumenical process to work on peace building and reconciliation in South Sudan. AFRECS commends the work that religious leaders in South Sudan have already begun to undo the damage of the past two months and to restore the trust that is so severely eroded.

Our prayers this Sunday must recognize the difficult challenges that the faith community faces. At the same time, the message AFRECS has heard from all across the board indicates that the churches are essential players in the peace and reconciliation process. Even as we urge support for humanitarian aid (see [ERD's appeal](#)), may we direct our prayers and resources towards Christians throughout South Sudan as they face the challenging journey towards living the Gospel message of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Faithfully,
Richard Parkins

Note from E-Blast Editor (EJH): Please take a close look (below) at an opportunity to join the conversation '**Concord: for peace and reconciliation**', a Lenten study from the Diocese of Wau in South Sudan. The following insightful introduction is written by the founding editor of this AFRECS E-Blast, Debra Morris Smith.

An opportunity to connect directly and authentically with Christians in South Sudan and potentially around the world is rare and valuable. This Lent, we have that opportunity: The Diocese of Wau in the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan has published [Concord: for peace and reconciliation](#) online, an interactive six-week bible study for Lent.

Individuals can join *Concord* and participate online, or groups can meet in person or virtually and then participate online with those from Wau Diocese and around the world. Signing up is easy, and all materials are downloadable and printable. Study materials include bible passages with background, reflections, and questions for thought and discussion written by Episcopalians in Wau Diocese. The peace-themed weekly topics are universally relevant but offer real insight into the lives and thinking of South Sudanese Christians. The course itself is excellent, and joining in the larger conversation about each week's lesson on Wau's discussion board provides a priceless opportunity to talk honestly about our faith with fellow Christians far away.

In Lent 2013, a group from the dioceses of Missouri and Salisbury, partners with Lui Diocese in the ECSSS, formed a group using the Diocese of Wau's first Lenten study. We had a discussion board on our Lui partners' site, and then we took conversations from it to the Wau discussion board and conversed with the authors and participants in the study there. It was a deeply enriching experience that we plan to repeat this year. I hope many in TEC and around the Anglican Communion will join in, especially at this difficult time in South Sudan, when 'concord' is such a timely topic.

Debbie Smith

Delegates of The South Sudan Council of Churches issued [an important statement in Addis Ababa](#) on 2/10/14. Follow this link to learn more about this ecumenical effort.

The Congressional Research Service ([CRS](#)) published a document entitled 'The Crisis in South Sudan' last month. It offers an in depth examination of the current situation, including a map which pinpoints the areas of conflict and a list of leaders now involved in the conflict. It also gives straightforward information about the current support from the US and advice to

members of Congress about what to consider in the future as the situation develops. It is a valuable source of information and interpretation for anyone interested in South Sudan. This and many other articles of interest are posted on [the AFRECS website on the Links page](#) under information on the current crisis.

Also on the [AFRECS website's Urge Others, Advocate page](#) is an important request for signatures. The [Sudan Advocacy Action Forum](#) and [Operation Broken Silence](#) have drafted [a letter from faith leaders](#) urging the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs to hold a hearing on H.R. 1692, the Sudan Peace, Security, and Accountability Act. They will send the letter on February 21, 2014. Please consider adding your signature to the letter. [Read their sign-on request here.](#)

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@afrecs.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 ECSSS entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.

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