

AFRECS E-Blast: February 25, 2015

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

**A Lenten Mission: Consider a Partnership in South Sudan**

Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Dear Friends,

As the conflict in South Sudan persists in spite of efforts at reaching an understanding that will halt the fighting, the Church continues to be a presence for its people. This task is especially difficult given the extent of displacement that has occurred in some dioceses and the pressure placed on all parts of the Church to be a force for peace and reconciliation. Meanwhile, their people await the time when South Sudan can reclaim a chance to live peacefully.

**Now is the time when friendship between American friends and those in South Sudan and Sudan is most urgently needed.** This message is an appeal for more of our Church entities to consider a relationship with the dioceses of the ECSSS. At this time, those relationships are most vitally needed by our Sudanese friends. If offered, they could make a huge difference, giving much needed hope to a Church that faces unbelievable challenges.

Repeatedly, we hear that **the Church's presence is essential** as a resource in bringing about peace and healing for this war-weary nation. Traditionally, the Church, in addition to being a spiritual resource for its people, has promoted education and health care for them. Often this has been a virtual substitute for the services normally provided by government. Added to that, now the Church shoulders the burden of being the key source of healing in those places where war has left its painful legacy. As advocates for peace in South Sudan, we hear repeatedly the strong imperative that the faith community carries a heavy responsibility. It must be a purveyor of peace and a bastion against a reoccurrence of conflict.

**This message is an appeal for more partnerships** between churches and dioceses in American and those of the ECSSS. About a dozen dioceses and several parishes now have partnerships of some kind with dioceses of the ECSSS. Friends in the UK have also formed vital bonds with partners in the ECSSS. However, there are some entities of the ECSSS which have not been embraced by any overseas partner. These are places where our witness is sorely needed and would be embraced enthusiastically if offered.

Sometimes there is a reluctance to seek partnerships in places where security is a problem or whose remoteness makes visitations difficult and expensive. **Yet, these are often the places where a friendship can make the greatest difference.** It is in such places where the absence of hope and a sense of being neglected, or worse - forgotten, compounds whatever difficulties the people in these areas face. Today these difficulties need not be insurmountable barriers to a relationship. Too many in our Church can counter that notion by citing their experiences.

We receive daunting information about the conflict in South Sudan. Such information can be overwhelming and rather than serving as a catalyst for engagement becomes a pretext for inaction. **The task of helping seems too daunting.** Statistics may inadvertently lead to inaction. Again, the task of helping seems too overwhelming and leads to a view that our intervention could not possibly help because of the complexity and magnitude of the problem.

However, if one realizes that behind these statistics are individuals, **a different feeling might emerge.** In some cases, their lives are at stake. In others, their lives could be substantially improved through our friendship. We can recall the several occasions in the Gospels when Christ healed one person who then bore witness to that healing. The ministry of Christ was not diminished because He did not heal all. The witness that was provided by these healing acts gave vitality to His ministry.

AFRECS receives many requests for help from Church leaders in South Sudan and Sudan. We cannot respond to all of them because our resources are limited and because responding to a myriad of deserving requests would overwhelm us. I know that this is true for other parts of our Church and those organizations that provide generous assistance to Sudanese friends. They are unable to extend help to the many worthwhile requests that come their way. Many of these pleas for help are the kind that a parish or a diocese might reasonably and more appropriately take on **through establishing a partnership** - a companion connection.

Here are a couple of **examples:**

-educating a prospective leader.

-supporting, or even building, a school.

These are typical of the kinds of help that a diocesan or parish partnership might offer.

For other examples, **consider:**

-establishing a clinic in one of the many parts of South Sudan where no health care exists.

-contributing to agricultural and small business ventures.

These can often profit from the infusion of modest resources from an outside friend. An overseas partnership might make a great difference.

In this current crisis, there are several **bishops and their families** who face near destitution because of being displaced. They are without any support system. If they had a partner, there might be a better chance that their lives would be less desperate. Their ability to serve their people might be enhanced.

If the Church in South Sudan is to become that hoped for **instrument of peace and reconciliation**, companionship in this task could mean a lot. Strengthening the ECSSS means allowing the leadership of the church to achieve its potential. This will challenge all of us who care about the future of South Sudan, all of us who believe that its future can be peaceful and free.

**This message has said little about the blessings of these partnerships.** Many in our Church who have experienced companion connections with parts of the ECSSS can attest to those rewards. They come from being a companion with a faith community in that part of the world. Another article will develop this theme more fully.

However, **the laborers are few** compared to the magnitude of the need and the possibilities for fruitful involvement. So, let this message be a plea for more within our network and beyond to prayerfully consider some form of partnership with a piece of South Sudan. If this challenge strikes you as doable, **please be in touch with AFRECS.** We shall help facilitate a connection.

**This can be our shared Lenten mission.**

Faithfully,

Richard Parkins

**P.S. - Encore entry to encourage use during our remaining Lenten journey...**

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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**Both Sudans**

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A unique learning opportunity focused on The Sudans is offered by [The Rift Valley Institute](#) this summer.

Their field course on Sudan and South Sudan takes place from July 11 - 17, 2015. Now in their twelfth year, the courses (including the other two offered this summer - one focused on the Horn of Africa and the other on The Great Lakes) provide a basis for understanding current political and developmental challenges in each particular region. They are taught by teams of leading specialists—from the region and beyond—and offer a unique opportunity to spend time with an outstanding group of specialists,

away from routine distractions. RVI courses are designed for policy-makers, diplomats, investors, development workers, researchers, activists and journalists—for new arrivals in the region and those already working there who wish to deepen their knowledge. A dawn-to-dusk programme of seminars, lectures, group discussions and special events examines the key social, environmental, political and cultural features of each of the three sub-regions.

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### **South Sudan**

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[Oil and Sustainable Peace in South Sudan](#), *A Working Paper*, by David K. Deng, Director of Research, South Sudanese Law Society, gives an insightful, insider's assessment of how the young nation can rise to its challenge of improving its current situation, thereby avoiding more negative impact of the economic crisis and maximizing their future potential. The author documents his view point to show that South Sudan is "the most oil dependent country in the world" with little incentive to invest in human resources or to develop a middle class that will broaden its tax base. Thus, it shows "all the telltale signs of the resource curse." In conclusion, the Working Paper ends with this realistic, yet hopeful statement: "The challenge moving forward is to take advantage of the opportunity by working to generate political will and public support for the reform agenda."

The author's executive summary follows:

- The newly independent nation of South Sudan displays all the telltale signs of the resource curse. The conflict that erupted in December 2013 has only compounded the problem.
- Unless urgent measures are put in place to ensure greater transparency and accountability over the use of oil revenue, the economic crisis facing South Sudan may ultimately inflict as much damage on the young nation as the war itself.
- South Sudan's petroleum laws are widely considered to reflect many aspects of good practice and provide a starting point for more extensive reforms. However, as with most laws in South Sudan, they remain almost completely unimplemented.
- The Petroleum Revenue Management Bill, 2013, for example, provides for a future generations fund that could ensure that the people of South Sudan enjoy the benefits of the country's oil wealth long after the oil is exhausted. If it were established, the future generations fund could reach as much as \$50 billion when existing oil fields run dry 36 years from now.
- In addition to implementation of existing laws, a robust international oversight mechanism can help to ensure that revenue from oil is channeled towards the nation's development priorities and not squandered on excessive military spending and corruption. South Sudan should draw lessons from other

countries' experiences with international oversight mechanisms to design a system suited to the South Sudanese context.

- The conflict that erupted in December 2013 has caused unimaginable suffering and pain for the people of South Sudan, but it has also generated opportunities for reform. The challenge moving forward is to take advantage of the opportunity by working to generate political will and public support for the reform agenda.

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David K. Deng  
Research Director, South Sudan Law Society (SSLS)  
[www.sslawsociety.org](http://www.sslawsociety.org)

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[The Sudan Tribune](#) reported recently that the South Sudan cabinet has called off general elections initially set for June 30th this year. Members of cabinet agreed to extend, through parliament, the mandate of the president and the national legislature for two more years. "In our quest for peace, the cabinet has decided to call off the elections and extend the lifespan of the elected positions so that we give peace a chance," the country's information minister, Michael Makuei Lueth, told reporters in Juba.

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### **Sudan**

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As reported by [Voice of America](#), Sudan's main opposition parties are planning to boycott the April presidential and parliamentary elections because President Omar al-Bashir's ruling National Congress Party controls everything in the country, said Hassan Osman Rizig, a Sudanese opposition leader who spoke for his and other major political parties. As deputy president of the opposition Reform Now Movement party, Rizig said that under such circumstances the elections will not be free and fair. This comes after President Bashir's party launched its campaign Tuesday. In response, Sudan information minister Ahmed Bilal said if the opposition believes in democracy, then it must take part in the elections.

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

We invite you to visit our [Website: http://www.afrecs.org/](http://www.afrecs.org/)

Ellen J. Hanckel  
Editor

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**PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE. LEARN.**

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](mailto: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.

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