

AFRECS E-Blast: April 13, 2016

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Message from Executive Director, Richard Parkins

The Unfinished Business of Ending Suffering: An Advocacy Agenda

Dear Friends,

Often one of the casualties of a protracted conflict is a growing mood of indifference or hopelessness, particularly when peace efforts continue to fall short. We are seeing some of that around the situation in South Sudan. However, for many of us, our periodic updates and exchanges with our friends in South Sudan remind us graphically of the suffering that persists and expands. There is also a core group of advocates, of which AFRECS is one, that continues to publicize the gravity of the crisis, putting forth actions that could move the pendulum toward peace. Some of the key advocacy issues to which we direct attention are noted below.

You will also receive with this eblast an updated, comprehensive summary from the [UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan](#) which sets forth the challenges confronting those who seek to end the war and suffering of the South Sudanese people.

- Continuing to keep the crisis of South Sudan before our respective faith communities is urgently needed. A recent editorial in The Washington Post was the first in quite some time that lifted up the protracted tragedy that has overtaken South Sudan. We must be a persistent source of information about what is happening to our sisters and brothers lest others assume a false impression that the peace agreement of last August has brought an end to the crisis. This would contribute to a diminished sense of urgency about the action that is still needed. Consult the [DHC Presentation](#) for the hard statistical information that documents your message of concern as you pursue advocacy through your own channels.

- The Government of South Sudan has continued to narrow the space for dissent from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society spokespersons. For those monitoring the situation on the ground, this removes their freedom to hold the government accountable to its obligations, chiefly in responding to the needs of its citizens. Advocates here are raising up concern on behalf of the NGO community about what it means when such freedom is curtailed. Holding the government accountable is unlikely to be vigorously pursued if dissent brings about punishment and marginalization.

- The growing food insecurity that faces South Sudan, most significantly in much of Equatoria, becomes even more critical without a formal declaration of a famine by the South Sudan Government. From all accounts, a de facto famine does exist and needs to be acknowledged. This would mobilize international donors to respond robustly to the urgency that the situation requires. Moreover, the food crisis is compounded by a persistent drought; the seizing by both government and opposition troops of whatever is cultivated; and the constant displacement of those who would otherwise cultivate crops if their situations were stable. There is, in fact, a crisis within a crisis. In the meantime, appeals for help for conflict areas of Equatoria are put forward even as areas such as Bor and Malakal struggle to regain a semblance of stability.

The US NGO community is ratcheting up attention to these imminent famine conditions. With the establishment of a government of national unity, a recommendation is pending that would tie the credibility of that government to the urgency given to delivering humanitarian assistance to those in greatest need. An immediate task is to remove barriers to access in those areas where famine is imminent.

- A corollary of the above is the need to protect humanitarian workers and to ensure their safety as they attempt to provide assistance to the thousands who are in or near conflict areas. Forty-nine humanitarian workers were killed in 2015. Therefore, insuring the safety of aid workers must be a priority of the transitional government if humanitarian assistance is to move forward.

- Human rights violations by both sides of the conflict are serious. Of special concern is sexual - gender based violence which has had a terrifying impact upon those already traumatized by the conflict itself. Documenting these violations and holding the perpetrators of such acts responsible for their behavior must occur if vulnerable members of society are to feel secure and the government is to have its credibility restored as a protector of its people. This concern is a key piece of the US NGO advocacy agenda.

- The ease with which all factions can obtain arms contributes to the proliferation of conflicts. There are areas that have erupted with violence that were not a part of the early conflict and were not even players when the agreement was reached last August. Advocacy is now building up to push for an arms embargo. This is viewed as one way of reducing the ease with which tenuous situations can become areas of violent conflict. There continue to be questions around the enforcement of an embargo since its effectiveness requires that all parties be prohibited from procuring illegal arms. Nevertheless, the prevalence of arms encourages violence as an option in an environment where revenge is a social norm.

A corollary of the move to an arms embargo is a stricter policy of sanctioning major human rights offenders on both sides. Moving on both measures would be actively considered if the delay continues in implementing a government of national unity.

By providing this litany of concerns with corresponding responses, I hope that you can recognize the ongoing advocacy that we and others are doing to effect public policy around the conflict in South Sudan. An upcoming hearing on April 25th will be an occasion when some of the sentiments and positions of the advocates will be voiced.

In the meantime, as policy makers seek ways forward in bringing the conflict in South Sudan to a peaceful end, we must all fervently pray that the leaders who keep this conflict alive have a change of heart. We must also continue our prayers for those who endeavor to find ways to advance peace and reconciliation. Let us give thanks to the work of the Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation Commission (JPRC) of the ECSSS and the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). Pray that those who extend the work of peace making have the courage and patience to do the demanding work before them.

Faithfully,

Richard

Message from AFRECS Board Member, Richard J. Jones

Report from New Wineskins for Global Mission 2016

Last weekend near Asheville, North Carolina the New Wineskins Missionary Network convened perhaps 800 (my estimate) adults, youth, and children for the latest of their triennial conferences on global mission begun in 1994.

Alongside Ed and Susan Eastman of Duke Divinity School; Ellen Hanckel, editor of the AFRECS newsletter; and Tom Prichard of Sudan Sunrise, I went especially to hear Grant LeMarquand, assistant bishop in the Anglican Diocese of Egypt and based in Gambella, Ethiopia across the border from Sudan.

With support from Anglican Relief and Development in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, Grant and his physician wife Wendy have been working for three years among the indigenous Anuak people and an influx of Nuer and Murle refugees from South Sudan. Wendy has addressed the high child death rate from diarrhea by teaching mothers to filter and boil drinking water – in a place where the temperature commonly reaches 140° Fahrenheit and there is no clean water. Grant has worked to help leaders in a diocese of 17 clergy, none with theological training, to grow in their ability to mediate ethnic conflicts and to articulate their faith in the power of the Risen Christ. The government of Ethiopia seeks to keep the religious peace by discouraging conversions and requiring the churches to leave relief and development work to the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Grant, who taught New Testament at Trinity School for Ministry and edited the missionary letters from Sudan of Marc Nikkel entitled *Why Haven't You Left?*, has launched a modest seminary, named for the earliest evangelist to Ethiopia, St. Frumentius.

An evangelism officer for The Episcopal Church once remarked that the Early Church never resolved its theological differences – think of circumcision and keeping kosher, the correct date for Easter, which books to be included in the Bible, and the role of women. Instead, he observed, the Church outran these differences by pursuing mission.

I thought of this as I greeted two Virginia Seminary graduates who are now church planters with the Anglican Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic; shook hands with Foley Beach, Primate of the Anglican Church of North America; offered a contact with the U. S. Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control to an administrator of Anglican Relief and Development to facilitate a response to her application to transfer funds to the Diocese of Port Sudan for tractor purchase; and listened to Bishop Ken Clarke of SAMS-Ireland expound on teamwork from Philippians. I was glad to hear that Five Talents has opened two community-owned banks and still reports hundreds of women-led saving groups active in South Sudan.

How can those of us who are friends of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan *not* consult and *not* honor the scope of each other's efforts in whatever work of reconciliation and healing God is up to among the Sudanese he loves?

-- Richard J. Jones, AFRECS board member and retired professor of mission and world religions, Virginia Theological Seminary, richard.j.jones@comcast.net

Encore Entry: Message from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

Calling for a Season of Prayer

The Public Affairs Office of The Episcopal Church posted this [Media Release](#) on Tuesday 3/29/16:

"Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has called for a season of prayer for regions of the Anglican Communion which are experiencing violence and civil strife."

These regions include South Sudan as well as Burundi, Central America, Democratic Republic of Congo, Middle East, and Pakistan.

"In this season of Resurrection, I call on everyone to pray for our brothers and sisters in areas where there is much burden and little hope," the Presiding Bishop said.

Citing Galatians 6:2 - *Bear one another's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ* - Presiding Bishop Curry called for prayer throughout the holy season of Easter beginning on April 3, the Second Sunday of Easter and proceeding through Pentecost, May 15.

More information is available [here](#). Updates will continue throughout the Easter season.

SAVE THE DATE for the 2016 AFRECS CONFERENCE in Des Moines, Iowa, October 21 - 23.

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South Sudan

[US Department of State](#): South Sudan: US Condemns Recent Attacks by SPLA which destroyed a declared opposition cantonment site... in Wau County...

The [UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator \(DHC\)](#) for South Sudan, Sue Lautze, PhD (lautze@un.org) released last month a comprehensive presentation of the Humanitarian Response Plan. It includes photos, graphics and information that are well worth viewing in full. Excerpts follow:

-Humanitarian partners reached 4.5 million people in 2015. Requested: 1.64 billion (US \$). Funded: 64%. Received: 1.04 billion.

-Current Humanitarian Response Plan addresses many challenges, including: Food; Water; Health; Protection; Education.

Strategic Objective #1) Save lives and alleviate suffering through safe access to services and resources with dignity.

Strategic Objective #2) Ensure communities are protected, capable and prepared to cope with significant threats.

-People in Need: 6.1 million
People Targeted: 5.1 million
Requirements: 1.3 billion (US \$)

-Number of Partners 114: 11 UN; 40 National NGOs; 63 International NGOs.
Number of Projects 261

-Description of conditions in country:
Population is uprooted. Hunger is widespread. Another generation is at risk. Thousands have lost their lives. Infrastructure losses are extensive. Sexual and gender-based violence is pervasive. (page 11)

"An unknown number of people have died since December 2013 as a result of the crisis. In South Sudan, births are unregistered and the deaths are uncounted. This is a violation of the most basic of human rights: the right to have ever existed." (page 12)

"Funding is needed now if the youngest members of the world's youngest nation are to have a future."
Jonathan Veitch, UNICEF Representative, South Sudan (page 24)

Other current information on South Sudan is provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). [Special Report: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to South Sudan, April 2016.](#)

Sudan

[Voice of America](#): Sudan to Hold Darfur Referendum in Spite of US Concerns. "The vote will determine whether the region will keep its five states or reunite as one entity with a semi-autonomous administration."

[Sudan Tribune](#): Sudan demands African Union to probe actions of ICC chief prosecutor.

Both Sudans

[allAfrica/ Radio Dabanga \(Amsterdam\)](#): Sudan Terrorism Court Sentences 22 (South Sudanese) to Hang.

[Sudan Tribune](#): South Sudan (Unity State) recovers looted cattle from Sudan's Miseriya tribe.

The Region

[BBC: Africa highlights](#): South Sudan rebels 'beaten up' in Juba; Zambia journalists charged with defaming president and other African stories.

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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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.