

AFRECS E-Blast: May 4, 2016

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

Messages from Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Is Peace the Next Chapter?

Dear Friends,

There has been an interesting and surprising convergence of events in my schedule these past couple of weeks which cause me to be hopeful about the future of South Sudan. This glimmer of optimism is the result of spending time with a new friend, a Catholic priest from Rwanda, who invited me to observe with other friends a program of commemoration for the end of the genocide in Rwanda.

This commemorative program, while recalling the tragedy of Rwanda's genocide, moved beyond that as young Rwandans and officials spoke with conviction about a new Rwanda which was at relative peace, having recovered from one of the most devastating genocides of the last few decades. There was a sense of determination in the demeanor of these Rwandans that not only echoed a loud "never again" but an equal determination to guard against any vestige of what might detract from Rwanda's moving forward as a peaceful and secure nation. There was even a plea that those outside Rwanda see their nation as something much more than just a place where an unimaginable human tragedy occurred. In expressing pride in their country, accompanied by an invitation to visit, they set forth civil society and the faith communities as key actors in bringing about this better Rwanda.

While reflecting on the testimonies of Rwanda students, public officials and religious leaders, I was prompted to think of what these messages might mean for our work for peace in South Sudan. I hear endless comments about South Sudan becoming a failed state. The failure of the peace agreement of last summer to take hold discourages all of us who had hoped that conflict and violence would by this time be history. The suffering that persists in parts of South Sudan adds to our alarm and despair. Our profound sorrow at what is happening in South Sudan is understandable.

However, as I remembered the sentiments of a deeply troubled world in 1994 when Rwanda was in the midst of one of the world's most brutal rejections of human life and now our ability to celebrate a nation at relative peace, I was prompted to think that South Sudan could have a similar next chapter..

While South Sudan is a much larger country than Rwanda and ethnically much more diverse, both factors that make peace and reconciliation a more challenging task, something along the lines of the robust faith community and empowered civil society that guided Rwanda in a new direction might work in South Sudan. With fervent prayers and faithful listening to our Lord's message of forgiveness and reconciliation, peace in South Sudan might be achievable.

Faithfully,
Richard

Statement on the Situation in South Sudan

Dear Friends,

As many of you know, Riek Machar, the leader of the SPLM - IO, has returned to Juba after a series of delays. He has been sworn in as first vice president which is presumably the act that launches the formation of the new government of national unity as specified in the August 2015 peace agreement. The challenges facing this body are many, including the cessation of fighting which is still occurring in parts of South Sudan, most notably in Equatoria.

Recently, the key NGOs and religious bodies who have been advocating for peace in South Sudan and pressing the international partners to hold the adversaries accountable for their unwillingness to cease fighting and commission of horrific human rights violations, issued a statement making the administration of humanitarian relief the key test of the effectiveness of the new government. Giving access to humanitarian relief agencies to reach the thousands on the brink of starvation and to provide aid themselves is regarded as the most urgent priority to be pursued by this government of national unity.

On Thursday, April 28th, a hearing of the House Sub Committee on Africa, was the occasion for the advocates to express these views. AFRECS is among the organizations that have endorsed this position. ([See the April 25th Statement on the Situation in South Sudan here](#) as well as below.)

Please pray that the adversaries who comprise this new arrangement will endeavor to work together and put the welfare of over a half million persons suffering from severe food insecurity above all else. Pray for the suffering in South Sudan whose lives are in peril if hostilities do not cease and relief is not immediately provided.

Thanks,
Richard

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](#).

[The update on South Sudan is available here.](#)

In addition:

You will find the [Propers for the Martyrs of Sudan and South Sudan \(with icon\)](#), available for use in parishes and dioceses. The Collect for the Martyrs could be especially appropriate this Sunday as an answer to the (above) call of the Presiding Bishop to a Season of Prayer - in particular South Sudan, this Sunday, May 8th.

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

Under the theme of 'Building Bridges of Reconciliation' the conference will

- 1) Explore opportunities for the Sudanese diaspora to contribute to peacemaking in the Sudans and**
- 2) Explore ways the friendship of North Americans can contribute to peacemaking in the Sudans.**

If you are interested in working on or contributing to this conference which is developing now, please contact Rich Jones, Chair of the Conference Planning Committee by replying to this email or by using our main contact email address: info@afreecs.org.

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South Sudan

The first paragraph of the April 25th [Final Statement on the Situation in South Sudan](#) follows:

We, the undersigned organizations, continue to be alarmed by the drastic humanitarian situation in South Sudan, with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network reporting increasing death rates and a deepening humanitarian catastrophe. While the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity may be an important step, its first actions must be to end the fighting that continues and to provide immediate unimpeded humanitarian access throughout the country to alleviate the suffering of the South Sudanese people. Progress on these issues should be a key test of the new government in determining whether the international community should provide financial support in the coming months.

The Statement is signed by the following twelve organizations:

American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans, Richard Parkins, Executive Director; **Better World Campaign**, Peter Yeo, President; **Coalition of Advocates for South Sudan**, Mr. Kwaje Lasu, Chairman of the Board; **The Enough Project**, John Prendergast, Founding Director; **Humanity United**, David Abramowitz, Managing Director; **InterAction**, Lindsay Coates, President; **Jewish World Watch**, Mike Brand, Director of Policy and Programs; **Presbyterian Church (USA)**, Rev Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly; **Refugees International**, Michel Gabaudan, President; **STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities**, Francesca Freeman, Student Director; **Sudan Advocacy Action Forum**, Dr. Eleanor Wright, Moderator; **United to End Genocide**, Tom Andrews, President.

[Testimony of John Prendergast](#), Enough Project Founding Director, before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations' hearing on "South Sudan's Prospects for Peace and Security," given on April 27, 2016.

[Radio Tamazuj](#): On April 26th, Riek Machar was sworn in as First Vice President of South Sudan this afternoon at the presidential palace known as J1 in Juba, where he was welcomed as a "brother" by President Salva Kiir. Here is a record of Kiir's full speech after the swearing-in of Machar.

On May 2nd, [Radio Tamazuj](#) reported that (Rebel) General Gadet says he will keep fighting despite peace agreement. "Gadet said he would continue to champion the cause of war until a comprehensive peace agreement is reached or when president Kiir and his deputy in the unity government Riek Machar relinquish power and allow a third party to take the leadership from them."

[Vatican Radio](#): New South Sudan Cabinet meets. South Sudan's President Salva Kiir Mayardit has called on his new cabinet ministers, in the newly formed Government of National Unity (GNU) to see themselves as colleagues belonging to one big family. President Kiir said the new unity government should work to overcome insecurity in the country. He cautioned cabinet members against disunity.

[AllAfrica](#): South Sudan: Nation Looks to Machar, Kiir for National Reconciliation.

[TIME magazine](#): The Secret War Crime: Survivors of Wartime Rape Are Refusing to Be Silenced.

South Sudan Law Society (SSLS): Two new publications from the research project “Intersections of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in South Sudan”, carried out in cooperation by the University for Peace (UPEACE) Centre The Hague, the South Sudan Law Society (SSLS) and PAX.

[1\) Observations on the Mandate of the South Sudan Commission on Truth, Reconciliation and Healing \(CTRH\)](#)

[2\) Expanding the Reach of Justice and Accountability in South Sudan.](#)

Also from [SSLS: Statement from the Transitional Justice Working Group \(TJWG\)](#) on the Establishment of

the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGONU) and the Implementation of Chapter V of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCISS)

[US Department of State](#): US Announces Additional Humanitarian Assistance for People of South Sudan.

Sudan

[A letter from Bishop Andudu Adam Elnail of the Diocese of Kadugli](#), located in Sudan. His letter describes some of the horrors of war that are taking place in this diocese.

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

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@afreecs.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.