

AFRECS E-Blast: June 10, 2015

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

“Plan B”

Message from *AFRECS President, Bishop David C. Jones*

Dear Friends,

Sometimes the thought of establishing a relationship between one’s congregation and a remote congregation on the other side of the world seems impossible. The distances seem too great - language would be a problem – it would be difficult to get there – it would be far too expensive. The logical and practical reasons for not considering a partnership might discourage the most committed person.

But the mission committee at Calvary Episcopal Church in Front Royal, Virginia was not discouraged by any of these challenges. No, they were not in a position to travel. Funds were limited. They had not before engaged in international mission. But In response to a call to mission by their bishop, the congregation and clergy of Calvary Church set out to do what they could. I call it “PLAN B!”

With the assistance of the Diocese of Virginia’s Director of Mission, Buck Blanchard, and the bishop of the Diocese of Ibba in South Sudan, Calvary established contact with a lay leader of St. Paul Parish, Maniakara, Seth Kpaka. The leader of Calvary’s mission committee, Frank Baxter, then became a prayer partner with Seth. The relationship began with prayer and email exchanges. This led to the exchange of pictures and the sharing of stories. Then, Frank in Front Royal and Seth in South Sudan began to match additional prayer partners. Now, from that initial contact, more than a dozen new relationships have been established between parishioners of both parishes. They are now planning to exchange music. A project to provide safe drinking water for St. Paul Parish has been launched.

To make this ministry possible, Seth travels to the diocesan office in Ibba to send email messages from his congregation to members of Calvary. Since he is the only member of his congregation to speak English, he has to translate both incoming and outgoing messages and deliver them to the proper recipients.

A beautiful surprise in this relationship came when Seth and his wife recently invited the people of Calvary to name their new baby daughter. After considerable conversations, the people of Calvary suggested the name, Virginia. This relationship is bringing great joy and satisfaction both in Front Royal, Virginia and Maniakara, South Sudan.

Might we think creatively about how we can circumvent initial obstacles to mission and invent our own PLAN B!

Faithfully,
+David
David Colin Jones
President of AFRECS

AFRECS luncheon at General Convention on July 1st, beginning at 12:30 PM

Dear Friends,

If any of you are attending General Convention please know that you would be welcome to the ***AFRECS luncheon on July 1st at the Salt Lake Marriott on West Temple (Downtown)***. If you are not attending General Convention, please be so kind as to reach out to those in your diocese who might be attending General Convention and alert them to the luncheon. ***AFRECS and our Church Center colleagues are hosting the luncheon*** as a means of bringing those concerned with current developments in South Sudan together in conversation. We plan to provide an ***update on developments there*** and also ***share our work in supporting the peace efforts of the ECSSS***. The luncheon is on July 1st from 12:30 to 2:30. If you or others are able to join us, please RSVP to me (richardparkins1@gmail.com) or Ranjit Mathews (rmathews@episcopalchurch.org).

With all good wishes,

Richard Parkins
AFRECS Executive Director

Mark your calendars

In October, we will gather in the Washington D.C. area for our annual conference. This year we will pay particular attention to the establishment and maintenance of partnerships as well as providing up to date information about the ongoing crisis in the South. **Please mark your calendars for Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24, 2015.**

More details will follow.

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South Sudan

War in the Oil Fields:

Recently, [Voice of America](#) reported that South Sudan's military said its forces are in control of the oil fields in Unity and Upper Nile States, contrary to rebel claims that they captured the fields after heavy fighting.

[News 24](#) reports the rebels have claimed the key oil fields.

This [Sudan Tribune](#) article includes the above conflicting claims and gives a wider focus. "Armed South Sudanese rival forces have traded accusations attempting to depict the other to have carried out attacks on territories under their control in different parts of the country in violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement signed on 23 January 2013. The warring parties also claimed having defeated the other in different fronts in Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal regions."

Cautious Hope for Peace Talks

Lead negotiators in South Sudan peace talks expected to meet on Monday in Addis Ababa, according to [Sudan Tribune](#). "The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the regional bloc mediating South Sudan's peace talks have brought the two chief negotiators, Nhial Deng Nhial of the government and Taban Deng of the rebel side for face-to-face consultations. "David Dang, deputy representative of the SPLM/SPLA-IO mission office to Ethiopia and to the African Union (AU) told IGAD... a time table (will be set) for resumption of the next round of talks based on outcomes of the consultations between the chief negotiators.

"According to Dang, if an agreement is reached between both sides, the next round of talks will directly be between President Salva Kiir and armed opposition leader, Riek Machar."

In another [Sudan Tribune](#) article which pictures ECSSS Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul, the headline reads: 'South Sudanese clerics want churches involved in peace process.'

"Religious leaders attending a one week retreat organised by South Sudan Council of Churches have advocated that the church be allowed to play roles in the country's peace process, which should be owned by South Sudanese stakeholders. The resolution is part of what emerged during the religious leaders' retreat held from 1-7 June in Rwanda's capital, Kigali.

"The church has historically played significant roles in peace building," the group said, citing the church's involvement in several past peace processes in the country, including the Naivasha accord and the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Only the church can bring about forgiveness and reconciliation," the clerics stressed. They also showed full support for the international

community and vowed to work with them in efforts to peacefully end South Sudan's war. At the same time, they urged the warring parties in the conflict to immediately cease military hostilities and return to the peace talks mediated by the regional bloc (IGAD).

The delegation also developed interest in Rwanda's homegrown peace initiatives, a mechanism they said could be practical in their country. In addition, a number of government officials and lawmakers accompanied the religious leaders to Kigali where they met their counterparts and other representatives to exchange ideas.

This recent [Huffington Post](#) article details how the return of political exiles for a visit to South Sudan raises cautious hopes for peace. "After more than a year in exile, five former political detainees arrived in South Sudan's capital city of Juba this week for several days of talks with President Salva Kiir. Their return offered a rare moment of hope in the country's long-faltering peace process."

Both South Sudan and Sudan

Pastors Facing the Death Penalty

[Sudan Tribune](#) reports that two South Sudanese pastors face the death penalty in Khartoum for voicing opposition to a corruption scandal at Khartoum Bahri Church. An excerpt follows from a press release issued recently by the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS).

"Two South Sudanese pastors are currently on trial in Khartoum for criminal charges which carry the death penalty under Sudan's 1991 Penal Code after making public remarks criticizing a corruption scandal at a Khartoum Church and the treatment of Christians in Sudan. The two men Yad Michael, (m), 49 years of age, and Peter Yen, (m), 26 years of age, were detained by Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) on 14 December 2014 and 11 January 2015 respectively, and held incommunicado until their first family visits on 2 March 2015. They were transferred to Kober prison on 1 March after being charged by the Office of the Prosecutor for Crimes against the State. Their first court session was on 19 May, and the second on 31 May. The next court session is scheduled for 15 June 2015.

"Mr. Michael and Mr. Yen are both Christian missionaries and South Sudanese nationals visiting Sudan who had been vocal about the controversial sale of land and property belonging to the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church and the treatment of Christians in Sudan. The sale was made by the Community Council of the Church, a body appointed by the Government of Sudan's Ministry of Endowments and Guidance which reportedly does not have a mandate to sell church land. Sudanese police forces violently raided the Church on 2 December 2014 to break up a sit-in demonstration organized by members of the congregation protesting the sale. 38 people were arrested and 20 convicted of disturbing the public peace and membership of criminal or terrorist organisations."

Sudan

Bashir Forms a New Government

[BBC News](#) reports that Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has formed a new government a month after winning elections that were boycotted by the main opposition parties and tarnished by a poor turnout.

"Speaking at his inauguration last week, the president said that he wanted to repair ties with the West, tackle corruption and bring peace to the country. Another priority is restoring Sudan's ailing economy. Mr Bashir, 71, seized power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989."

In a related article, BBC Sudan Analyst, James Copnall, writes, "Even President Bashir has been forced to admit - with civil war(s) continuing, and the ongoing economic crisis - that Sudan needs to change, and this reshuffle is part of his promised reforms." Copnall cites that there were "several changes among the governors, which seem designed to remove any who were developing sizable local power bases. But simply replacing ministers and governors will not bring change. Instead, the way Sudan is governed will have to improve if the country is to escape from its current malaise."

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.
