

AFRECS E-Blast: August 18, 2016

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

Message from Executive Director, Richard Parkins:

Dear Friends,

On a call with friends and partners who comprise the Anglican Alliance, a refrain that emerged repeatedly from our partners in South Sudan was the fear and confusion that is so prevalent, especially since the outbreak of violence that occurred in Juba on July 8th. At the time of that call, a semblance of calm had returned to Juba; but it seemed that there was little confidence that this calm would last or that folks could resume a more peaceful, normal way of life any time soon. In borrowing from a phrase from a statement from the South Sudan Council of Churches, "Trust has been broken again and again. When will our people be free to laugh and trust?"

As we know, fear is an emotion that tends to overwhelm us and often inhibits more positive thinking. It robs a person of the ability to be hopeful about one's future. Fear and the uncertainty that often comes with it make it difficult for victims of frequent violence and suffering to believe that a better life awaits them. Understandably, safety and survival become dominant concerns that frustrate those who try to introduce peace and reconciliation as responses to the unmitigated violence that surrounds so many in South Sudan.

Recognizing this reality, individual churches and the Church, collectively through the work and messages of the South Sudan Council of Churches, continue to encourage hopefulness by lifting up the message of Jesus as found in John's gospel - *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. (based on John 14:1)*. And to underscore their understanding of the depth of despair and hopelessness that afflicts so much of South Sudanese society, the words of the Psalmist are offered as a reminder of the constancy of God's presence - *Though an army encamp against me, my heart would not fear. Though war break out against me, even then would I trust." (Psalm 27:3-4)*

On a recent trip to Juba, which included a visit to a nearby camp where thousands of displaced persons had been living marginally for the past two and a half years, we experienced a sense of acute abandonment through countless messages. Among the people, there was awareness of a peace agreement but several noted that nothing was happening to alleviate their current suffering or to give them a sense that there was a future before them that was not one of more pain.

What we also experienced was the commitment of Church leaders, pastors, priests, and faithful Christians - such as members of the Mothers' Union - to make peace a reality for their people. As the violence continues, their task will become more formidable because of the fear that is unleashed when violence or the prospect of violence becomes the norm. Therefore, let us pray that the messages of Scripture which speak to God's abiding presence in the lives of the faithful will take hold. In turn, may they be emboldened as peacemakers.

Faithfully,

Richard

UPDATE on AFRECS Conference

BUILDING BRIDGES OF RECONCILIATION

Sponsored by

American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans

October 21-23, 2016

West Des Moines, Iowa

“We need constructive support from our Sudanese brothers and sisters outside the country as we seek to restore peace and rebuild trust in South Sudan.”

-- **Rev. Peter Gai, Chairman, South Sudan Council of Churches**

This conference will bring together Sudanese from the Diaspora and from South Sudan with American friends of South Sudan and Sudan to work for peace and reconciliation in the world’s youngest nation.

We will ask ourselves:

- Where are the opportunities to support the Diaspora in the USA in its efforts for peace and reconciliation in South Sudan?
- How can the friendship of Americans contribute to peacemaking in South Sudan and Sudan?

You can expect:

- Inspiring stories of how partnerships of South Sudanese and Americans, even during these last thirty months of conflict, are working together for positive outcomes
- News of South Sudan from African guests
- Opportunities to meet and work for peace with friends dedicated to building a stable nation in South Sudan.
- Workshops led by experts with experience in mediation and peace building
- Learn what the Commission for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation and the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission are doing to train and enable Peace Mobilizers in South Sudan
- Hear from Sudanese leaders about their challenges, learnings, and successes as they work to build reconciling congregations in the American Diaspora
- Learn ways the US government is seeking to build peace, and what the church is doing to speak for peace to governments

Guest Speakers and Workshop Leaders:

- Bishop Samuel Enosa Peni: Diocese of Nzara, South Sudan and Chairperson of the Joint Peace and Reconciliation Commission of The Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan.
- Bishop Joseph Garang Atem: Diocese of Renk, South Sudan
- His Excellency Pa’gan Amum Okiec: former Secretary General of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement, signer of the Transitional Peace Agreement, August 2015.
- Dr. James A. Leach: U. S. Representative, Iowa 1st Congressional District, 1977-2007; retired Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities.

- Dr. Dane F. Smith; former Senior Advisor in the Office of the US Special Envoy for Darfur, Deputy Chief of Mission in Sudan, and Ambassador to Guinea and Senegal.
- Mother Harriet Baka Nathan: Provincial Mothers Union Coordinator, South Sudan
- Rev. Phil Groves, Continuing Indaba Project, Secretariat of the Anglican Communion, London

Additional presenters will be added to this list as they are confirmed.

Logisitcs:

Location: St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 1020-24th St., West Des Moines, IA 50266

Registration: Online at www.afrecs.org or by mail: AFRECS, PO Box 12026, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304 USA

Cost: \$100 registration fee covers full attendance. Meals are included (Friday lunch and dinner, Saturday lunch and banquet). Continental breakfast will be available Friday, Saturday, and Sunda. Heavy breakfast eaters will find a buffet at the hotel. There is a Perkins and a McDonald's within a block of the hotel.

Scholarships: Diaspora attendees, seminarians, and students are automatically granted full scholarship. Please register and identify yourself as scholarship-eligible to help us plan the meals. You may make a free-will donation at your discretion. Any surplus funds at the end of the conference will go to the work of the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission in South Sudan.

Air Travel: Fly to Des Moines International Airport (DSM). For best fares you are urged to book air transportation by August 31. If you fly to DSM and stay at the Marriott Hotel the hotel will provide complimentary transportation to and from the airport. For best service call the hotel ahead of time and give them your flight information.

Hotel: West Des Moines Marriott
1250 Jordan Creek Parkway, West Des Moines, Iowa 50266
Telephone 515-267-1500
Conference Rate: \$109 (plus tax) per night
To book at the group rate you may use this link:

[Book your group rate for AFRECS Oct 2016](#)

IMPORTANT: To get the special rate, which applies to nights of Oct. 20, 21, &22, you must book no later than Monday, October 3. You must book on line or by phone directly to the hotel. You WILL NOT get this rate on a travel website.

Logistics Inquiries: AFRECSconference2016@mediacombb.net

Program Inquiries: info@afrecs.org

A Recent Message from AFRECS Board Member, Ray Gaebler

Dear Friends,

First the Good News: If you are following the Olympics you have heard that 5 members of the “Refugee Team” come from the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Kakuma was opened in 1991 to provide a safe harbor for civilians fleeing the second civil war in Southern Sudan. Approximately 20,000 boys and girls were sheltered there in the 1990s, many under the age of ten who walked up to 1000 miles seeking safety. The camp population had grown to about 185,000 by June of last year. Approximately 3800 young men were welcomed into the United States in 2001 and were known as the “Lost Boys of Sudan.”

The good news is that the International Olympic committee and an organization called “Film Aid” were able to set up large screens in Kakuma where the residents are watching their friends compete. Read all about it at <http://www.sbnation.com/2016/8/12/12449710/refugee-camp-rio-olympics-team-screenings-broadcasts-kakuma-athletes>

The Bad News: Tension in Juba continues to mount. Recently, the UN voted to increase the number of peacekeepers in South Sudan and the South Sudan government has said they will not be allowed to come, citing this as an infringement of their sovereignty. Further, the government has declared that South Sudanese advocating for the increase are traitors encouraging the overthrow of the sovereign government. Five passports have been revoked and more are threatened. Riek Machar has left Juba and said he will not return until an independent force can guarantee his safety.

Stay tuned and keep praying.

Peace,
Ray Gaebler

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Recent News from South Sudan

[Episcopal Relief & Development Supports SUDRA's Response to Unrest in South Sudan](#)

[Financial Times](#)

To save South Sudan, put it on life support - a recent article by Princeton Lyman and Kate Almquist Knopf.

[Intergovernmental Authority on Development - IGAD Plus Communique' on the Situation in South Sudan](#)
Communique' released after IGAD Plus Summit held on August 5th in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

[Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations at a UN Security Council Briefing on Peacebuilding in Africa](#), given on July 28th.

[The New York Times](#): US Lawmakers Urge Obama on UN Arms Embargo for South Sudan. (Aug. 11th)

[The New York Times](#): U.N. Bolsters Peacekeeping in South Sudan Despite Government's Objections. (Aug.12th)

[The New York Times](#): Rampaging South Sudanese Troops Raped Foreigners, Killed Local. (Aug. 15th)

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.