

AFRECS E-Blast: September 24, 2014

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

*Editor's note:*

*If you have received this AFRECS E-Blast in a forwarded message, you may [sign up here](#) to subscribe. Then you will receive them on a regular basis, usually every two weeks. (See the end of this eblast to change your subscription information or options.)*

A Message from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins

Repeatedly we hear and thus spread the message that the church is the vehicle through which peace and reconciliation will come to South Sudan. At a recent meeting with government colleagues, we shared our deep concern about the crisis of food security which, if not resolved, could lead to the starvation of several hundred thousand South Sudanese. These people could be saved if the principals in the current conflict would agree to end hostilities and allow food deliveries to occur. The presumption at the meeting was that the religious leaders in South Sudan might have the leverage to move the adversaries to end the fighting and allow life saving intervention to happen. This account is one example of many that come our way where the church is offered as the critical, if not the primary, agent for bringing about a safer and more secure South Sudan. It's a tall order that raises some serious questions if this expectation is to be more than wishful thinking.

This view of the potential of the church prompts questions, such as:

-Is there enough willingness among church leaders and their followers to set aside denominational interests so that a resounding plea can be made to those who perpetuate the war to abandon their quest for power and to allow innocent people to survive?

-Are the major religious groups in South Sudan sufficiently unified within their respective structures to feel secure enough to move forward as partners in a larger ecumenical effort on behalf of a peaceful South Sudan?

-Are the churches able to divest themselves of any hint of the tribalism that infects so much of South Sudan's civil society?

-Can ties which churches or denominations might have to political factions in South Sudan be discarded in favor of a united South Sudan in pursuit of peace and security?

-Are efforts at peace making now under consideration committed to being truly inclusive of the broad spectrum of religious leaders and groups which comprise South Sudan?

These are some of the hard questions facing the religious communities in South Sudan if they are to confidently wear the mantle of peace maker. Answers to these questions assume that adherence to the gospel of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation - core elements of the Christian message - trump all other considerations.

The Gospel mandate is clear. The question is: Can the churches embrace the true discipleship that Christ so clearly defines in the Gospels?

In seeking an answer to this question, one must recognize those other allegiances in South Sudan that have impeded peace and unity. If the leaders of the churches can affirm their primary identity as purveyors of Christ's message, there are some practical considerations before us, such as:

- Can those to whom the church speaks be convinced of the validity of its message?
- Can healing happen for the thousands who are recovering from wounds so deep that we can hardly imagine their grief and anguish?
- Will those leading peace efforts be able to bring sufficient solace and hope to those whose recent pain is so intense that thinking about loving one's enemy would be quite a stretch?
- Can enough persons be trained to reach the thousands to whom the message of peace must be conveyed?
- Will the legitimacy and credibility of the church, as we have so often claimed, prevail in a climate of deepening mistrust?
- Can peacemaking happen in spite of calls for revenge and accountability?
- Will a peace and reconciliation program be given sufficient time to take hold in a country where the ravages of war linger and the fruits of development and rebuilding be, at best, future possibilities?
- Can communities of faith meet these many challenges?

As people of faith who believe in the possibility of new life, even when the ashes of hatred are smoldering, we answer with a resounding YES. We know of places where severe civil strife and horrendous violence have eventually - with time, patience, and prayer - moved toward the dawn of peace. But we also know that the conflict in South Sudan is between tribes, many of whose members called themselves Christian. The task before the peace makers in South Sudan is to cultivate an understanding of the Christian life that is so real and lasting that a sustainable culture of peace will emerge.

As we acknowledge the church as a primary architect of South Sudan's future, let us pray that it will be imbued with the wisdom and courage that this daunting mission requires. May we stand with them as friends while this mission unfolds. Let us pray for the church.

Faithfully,  
Richard Parkins

\*\*\*\*\*

The Sudan Tribune published this opinion piece recently: [A pastoral appeal to South Sudanese to reconcile](#). Written by a key leader in the National Platform for Peace and Reconciliation (NPPR) structure, Rev. Bernard Oliya Suwa, PhD, the author is also the Secretary General of the Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation. Representing the church leadership in South Sudan, the article echos and augments points made in the first message printed above.

\*\*\*\*\*

This [Reuters article](#) reports that the chief mediator at peace talks in Ethiopia, Seyoum Mesfin, told South Sudan's warring sides to stop stalling. As a representative of the regional East African group, the [Intergovernmental Agency for Development \(IGAD\)](#), the mediator voiced "the growing frustration of international and regional diplomats at the failure of both sides to end the fighting. Their conflict has killed more than 10,000 people and driven the nation of 11 million closer to famine," he said.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **South Sudan**

[Stop-Start South Sudanese peace talks resume](#) - reported by New Vision from Uganda.

South Sudan's Kiir departs for UN despite opposition protests - reported by the [Sudan Tribune](#).

China confirms contact with delegation from South Sudan in opposition - reported from China by [People's Daily Online](#).

Four million go hungry in South Sudan - [reported by StarPhoenix](#).

Waterlilies Sustain South Sudanese Escaping Civil War Horrors - [published by Bloomberg Businessweek](#).

Child malnutrition emergency in South Sudan - a [press release from UNICEF](#).

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Sudan**

Sudan delegation to Geneva refutes allegations, rejects condemnation of Sudan - reported in [Sudan Vision, An Independent Daily](#).

Darfur urged to rejoin dialogue process by Sudanese Presidential assistant, Ibrahim Ghandour, who says that their rebellion does not affect president Omer al-Bashir, but Darfurians and development in the region - published recently in the [Sudan Tribune](#).

Sudan is accused of supporting rebels, SPLM - IO, under the command of Riek Machar. A military source from Division One accused the rebels of killing Innocent citizens including women and children around Renk town - [reported recently by Radio Tamazuj](#).

"The Nuba people in South Kordofan are on the brink of starvation," the executive director of the Nuba Relief and Reconstruction Organisation, Najwa Musa Kinda, told [Radio Dabanga](#) - reporting from the heart of Darfur. She described the humanitarian situation in Southern Kordofan since the outbreak of fighting as "extremely bad. The Sudanese Air Force is continuously bombing the areas controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which has prevented the farmers from planting this rainy season."

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is to resume in Sudan, as recently reported in the [Associated Press](#). Khartoum authorities lifted a suspension of activities which was imposed on Feb. 1 when it said the aid organization was not complying with national laws...without giving details. At the time, the Red Cross had over 700 staff in Sudan, including locals and expatriates. The "priority is to have

our staff back on the ground as quickly as possible," said the head of the delegation. After that, the ICRC will start by a needs assessment in Sudan's conflict areas, because of the changes in the humanitarian situation since February.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Region - Both Countries of Sudan and South Sudan**

Analysis of population movement and the resulting Disaster Relief Emergency Fund distribution is published on [Relief Web](#). It is the most recent final report from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

\*\*\*\*\*

[The Enough Project \(EP\) is expanding its staff to include four new positions:](#) Director of Advocacy and Impact Strategy; Associate Director, Sudans and Horn of Africa; Senior Policy Analyst, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes Region; Media Relations Specialist. The open positions will add to the EP team and enable them to embark on a range of new initiatives, such as "an expansion of the Satellite Sentinel Project to carry out in-depth forensic investigations to map and work to shatter illicit financial networks that fuel war and atrocities." Click here for more information.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you to our E-Blast readers for continuing your interest, your prayers, and your support.  
Ellen J. Hanckel  
Editor

\*\*\*\*\*

Requests from the AFRECS Treasurer, Christy Hollywood

Renew your membership online at <http://www.afreecs.org/getInvolved.htm>

Make an additional donation to support the Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan's efforts to provide solace and encourage reconciliation.

Encourage others to support AFRECS as well.

\*\*\*\*\*

PRAY FOR PEACE AND DEEP HEALING OF THE CONFLICTS AND RIVALRIES IN SOUTH SUDAN.

PARTNER, URGE, GIVE

If you'd like to be doing more to help address the crisis in South Sudan, please consider the following:

\* 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](mailto:info@afreecs.org).

\* Pay attention to the evolving events and be prepared to advocate for peacemaking with the US (or other) government, especially if attention to conflict resolution wanes.

\* Give to provide relief for internally displaced persons and others whose resources are compromised by the fighting and instability. One hundred percent of [donations to AFRECS](#) go to ECSS&S entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.