

AFRECS E-Blast: September 25, 2013

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE

**In the church:**

**A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins**

Dear Friends,

I hope that many of you are planning to join the AFRECS conference in Chicago from October 18th to October 20th. If you have not registered, please do so. Registration information is available on the AFRECS web site. The conference begins at 1:30 on Friday, October 18th and ends on Sunday, October 20th with a choral Eucharist in the sanctuary of the beautiful St. James Cathedral at 11 a.m.

Plans are moving forward to provide conferees with a rich array of resources for gaining a deeper understanding of current developments in South Sudan and Sudan and the work of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS) in dealing with these developments. We are privileged this year to welcome four outstanding bishops of the ECS as guests along with two distinguished experts with extensive experience as representatives of the US Government who have worked in Sudan and South Sudan. We have structured our agenda to allow optimal time for interaction and discussion with our guests, because of both the knowledge they bring to the table and the complexity and urgency of the issues facing both Sudans.

As has always been the case, the richness of these national gatherings is what we learn from each other as we exchange experiences and observations. This will certainly be the case with this conference as we are led in discussions about theological education, partner relationships, community health education, and advocacy by senior program staff of The Episcopal Church, church leaders from within our own ranks as well as diocesan mission leaders from both the US and overseas. It should be a time of robust sharing and lots of learning. Your presence will add to the richness of our time together.

We meet at a time when our South Sudanese friends are moving forward to embrace life in a new nation. While we are hopeful about their future, we are also mindful of serious crises in Sudan which impinge on the peace and stability of South Sudan even as they inflict great suffering on those in the area of great conflict. These crises beg for understanding and resolution. We shall with the help of ECS bishops and other experts consider the plight of those in the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, Abyei, Darfur, Jonglei and Renk, a key border diocese that has experienced the impact of thousands fleeing persecution and incessant bombardment. Attention will be given to how heightened advocacy on our part can make a difference in their lives.

Your friends in AFRECS look forward to welcoming you to Chicago where again we shall seek ways to be friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan. We ask your prayers for peace for all our sisters and brothers in Sudan and South Sudan as well as prayers that our time together will be one of increased understanding of what is happening in both Sudans. May it also be an occasion for renewing our commitment to faithfully work with our Sudanese friends in the challenges that lie ahead for them.

The conference's early registration fee of \$125 has been extended up to the conference beginning, and a special hotel rate is available at the Allerton Hotel for reservations made by October 1 for rooms to be occupied October 17, 18, and/or 19. [Registration details](#) are available on our website.

Faithfully,

Richard Parkins  
Executive Director

### **News from Ellen at Bishop Gwynne College**

The Rev. Ellen Hanckel, AFRECS board member and eblast editor, is teaching at Bishop Gwynne College in Juba this fall. You can [follow her blog](#) from BGC; her first post went up yesterday.

### **Church and School Newsletters**

- \* The **Diocese of Kadugli** (Nuba Mountains) has just produced its first newsletter with help from Bradford Deanery in Salisbury Diocese. Available in English and Arabic, [this issue](#) details how donated money has been distributed and what needs remain in this war-torn area.
- \* There is a new edition of the **Diocese of Juba's secondary school newsletter**.
- \* **Hope for Humanity**, which runs the Hope and Resurrection Secondary School, has recently published an email newsletter. They report that among their expected graduates in December will be seven girls. (You can request their newsletter at <http://hopeforhumanityinc.org/>)

### **ECS Bishops Taking Stands**

- \* Anglican News Service reports on the leadership of **Nzara's Bishop Samuel Peni** in trying to stop the originally Ugandan militia The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).
- \* **Bishop Andudu** of **Kadugli** Diocese has written to President Obama asking him to help those suffering in the southern part of Sudan, and the Anglican Communion news service has an [article](#) about his efforts to advocate for his people.
- \* Bishop Ruben of the ECS Diocese of **Bor** has called for [peace and stability](#) in Jonglei State.

## In the two Sudans:

### Special Envoy Booth's First Visit

There has been very little news of the first visit of the new US special envoy, Ambassador Donald Booth, to Sudan and South Sudan. The website of the US Diplomatic Mission to South Africa says there will be a [telephonic press conference](#) with Booth tomorrow, September 26th. Sudan Radio had a [brief report](#) on the visit. With regard to Booth's visit to Sudan, the *Sudan Tribune* focused on the [government's anticipatory anger](#) at the stance of the US as it would be represented by Booth and on his [meeting](#) the rebel coalition SRF. With regard to Booth's visit to South Sudan, the newspaper mentioned his emphasis on making the [2015 elections](#) happen on time.

### Abyei

Activists and civil-society organizations in the Abyei community have [petitioned President Obama](#) to bring his personal influence to bear in bringing about the long-promised Abyei referendum. South Sudan's [President Kiir has appealed](#) to the international community for "urgent, coordinated, and strong" intervention into the dispute. Conversation about an October referendum has gained momentum on both sides; *The Niles* has a detailed [summary](#) of the issues. A Sunday [post](#) from John Ashworth contains a poignant poem, "Sorry, Mother Abyei," a report of a protest by Abyei-area residents saying that the Dinka Ngok chiefs will decide the matter if the referendum doesn't occur in October, and an analysis of the role of the US in it, with a focus on the recent appointment of Ambassador Donald Booth as special envoy to the two Sudans. And the Enough Project has an [interactive timeline](#) for the region and its troubles. The African Union is [urging](#) each side not to act unilaterally.

### Back to Bombing

The Enough Project's satellite imagery from September 8th shows that the Sudan Armed Forces [bombed](#) the village of Jau, which is situated in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone in South Sudan's Unity State.

### On the Recent Presidential Summit

The Sudd Institute offers its [analysis](#) of the recent visit of President Kiir to Khartoum in a succinct and insightful four pages.

### Mining

The [hunt for gold](#) is transforming work and commerce in Blue Nile. Likewise, some in [eastern South Sudan](#) are also panning for gold. NPR reports that giant mining companies are lining up for mineral rights in South Sudan, but the country is holding them off until it finalizes its mining regulations.

## Understanding Aid from China

For a fascinating analysis of the manner in which China is providing aid to African countries, check out this [report](#) and also this [one](#) from the UN-funded IRIN website. The daily *Sudan Vision* has [remarks](#) on the solidity of the Sudan-China relationship, and *The Niles* has the [story](#) on how China is funding expansion of the oil industry in South Sudan.

## Trade Between the Sudans

Yesterday Sudan and South Sudan signed an agreement [to reopen their shared border](#) to trade as well as agreements on customs and humanitarian work. The Sudanese interior minister said that border-state governors will meet soon to discuss implementation of the trade agreement.

## In South Sudan:

### 2015 Elections in Jeopardy

If the elections depend on completion of a [census](#), logistical problems may prevent their being held, says Isaiah Chol Aruai, chairman of the National Bureau of Statistics.

### Teaching Teachers

USAID, the international development arm of the American government, is providing training for teachers in South Sudan. Their [blog post](#) about it includes statistics and information about education and teacher preparation in the country.

### Abuses in Jonglei State

The army of South Sudan is [executing Murle people](#), including large numbers of civilians, reports Reuters. The army [denies](#) the accusation.

### Brewing in Unity State

Voice of America has a story on women who turn to [brewing local beer](#) to make a living in Unity State.

## In Sudan:

### President Al-Bashir and the Quest to Visit the UN

Recently the [Voice of America reported](#) that President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan had applied for a US visa to attend the upcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA),

underway this week, despite the fact that he is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes. *The New York Times* explained the [dilemma](#), including both the international imperative for the US to allow foreign leaders to travel to the UN and the fact that the US is not a member of the ICC. In a later story, the *Times* reported that the judges of the ICC have asked the US Department of Justice to [arrest](#) Bashir if he enters the US, and 24 human rights and Sudan activists suggested [ways of isolating](#) the Sudanese President and preventing him from functioning if US officials felt that UN protocols would force them to let him enter the country. The UK office of Amnesty International pressed the UN to demand that Bashir [surrender](#) to the ICC. Despite the condemnations, Bashir said he had a hotel reservation in New York and planned to attend the UNGA, according to [Reuters](#). As we publish this eblast, the Enough Project has [the latest](#) on protests in New York against the proposed visit by Bashir to the UNGA, including one planned for tomorrow, September 26th, while the New York Times has announced that Bashir is [canceling](#) his proposed visit to New York because of the violent protests in Khartoum against ending fuel subsidies (see below).

### **Darfur, Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains**

In a *Huffington Post* blog, [Eric Reeves](#) objects to Secretary Kerry's characterization of child deaths by gas (in Syria) as worse than other kinds of child deaths as an intro to details of the atrocities being carried out in the southern states of Sudan by the Khartoum government.

### **Protests Over Ending Fuel Subsidies**

Khartoum has seen several days of [protests](#) against the government's decision to end fuel price subsidies. Those protests have escalated and turned deadly. Radio Dabanga has the [story](#) on the spread of the protests and retaliatory arrests and violence across the country, *Time* says the [Internet](#) was shut down in Sudan as a reaction, and Reuters reports that the police are using [tear gas](#) to disperse the protesters.

### **Reading (Anything) in Khartoum**

Efforts to revive the habit of reading are underway in Khartoum. *The New York Times* has a [story](#) featuring the revival and some local bookstores.

**PRAY:** Please pray for the people of Sudan and South Sudan, for healthy, peaceful, and productive lives, for freedom to live, speak, and worship without fear.

**TEACH:** Join in teaching and learning at the upcoming [AFRECS conference](#) in Chicago October 18-20.

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