

# SUDAN CONNECTIONS

FALL 2016



VOLUME 11, NUMBER 1



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AFRECS - AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE SUDANS

# AFRECS CONFERENCE - OCTOBER 21-23, 2016



The ECS church at Yida Refugee Camp. Photo by Robin Denney, © 2012

## Building Bridges of Reconciliation

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American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans

October 21-23, 2016

West Des Moines, Iowa

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

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Register online here - <http://www.afreccs.org/annualConference.htm>



# SUDAN CONNECTIONS

CONNECTING HOPES AND GIFTS

FALL 2016

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*American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans (AFRECS) is an organization of U.S. churches, non-governmental organizations, and individuals who care deeply about the struggles of the Sudanese people.*

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[www.afrecs.org](http://www.afrecs.org)

## CONTACT INFORMATION

AFRECS  
3737 Seminary Road  
Alexandria, VA 22304

[info@afrecs.org](mailto:info@afrecs.org)

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF SOUTH  
SUDAN AND SUDAN  
Provincial Headquarters in Juba

[www.sudan.anglican.org](http://www.sudan.anglican.org)

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Being welcomed into  
UNMISS POC Camp 3 by  
Children's Choir  
Photo: Steven Miles ©  
Story on page 10



Send submissions for the next *Sudan Connections* to Richard Parkins, Executive Director, at [richardparkins1@gmail.com](mailto:richardparkins1@gmail.com).

## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE RT. REV. DAVID C. JONES, RETIRED SUFFRAGAN BISHOP, DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA



Dear Friends,

With a sense of anticipation, I am looking forward to the 11th Annual AFRECS Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, October 21-23, 2016. The theme, designed by Prof. Richard Jones and the planning committee, is *"Building Bridges of Reconciliation."* We will continue to explore how our friendships can support and contribute to the process of peacemaking in South Sudan and Sudan.

This Conference has always been a source of encouragement and inspiration for me. In addition to an impressive lineup of speakers and workshops, time for conversation and meals is equally inspiring.

If you have a heart for the people of the Sudans, please join us. Being with people who share a passion for ministry is always a delight. Personally, I need to join with the American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans. This has been a discouraging year for many of us, as we have seen further violence and increasing heartbreak. We need to encourage our Sudanese friends, while their steadfast faith will, indeed, inspire and encourage us. Please join us in October in Iowa.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Jones".



David Colin Jones, President of AFRECS

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

C. RICHARD PARKINS

Dear Friends,

The ravages of civil conflict continue to bring suffering to our friends in South Sudan. The fragile peace agreement negotiated in August 2015 barely survives. Some would contend that it has been so severely abrogated as to be meaningless. As of this writing, it remains the framework for bringing the warring factions together to form a stable, secure South Sudan. We pray that that goal is still being embraced by South Sudan's power brokers. We are also mindful that as tragedy upon tragedy consumes South Sudan, our friends in South Sudan, and most especially in the Nuba Mountains, still struggle to live freely as faithful Christians.

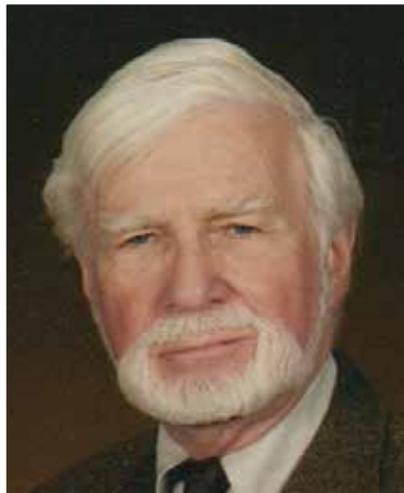
A recent visit by a team from AFRECS and The Episcopal Church (TEC) allowed us to hear voices of despair and hopelessness. The visit was also the occasion to witness the amazing courage of peacemakers in the church and in the larger NGO community and the transformation that continues to happen even as rumblings of war persist. AFRECS tries to be attentive to both the cries of despair and the celebrations that break through in the midst of despair.

One is tempted to dwell on the dismal statistics noting numbers of persons killed or displaced. These staggering figures speak of the egregious suffering of several million innocent souls. We, as partners, must acknowledge the heroic efforts of those who advance a narrative of redemption and recovery. AFRECS continues to be engaged in both.

This past year, we have journeyed with the team that leads the work of the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission (JPRC) as they move into areas where con-

flict was severe but where reconciliation is taking hold. We have assisted bishops forced from their dioceses with no means of support. We have helped nurture those displaced to camps with bibles and hymnals so that they can feed their souls when there is little else to sustain them. We have been reminded of the ongoing travail that afflicts those in the Diocese of Kadugli, assisting them

with humanitarian aid and support for the training of pastors. We persist with our advocacy by confronting our public officials with compelling first-hand testimony, often through the visits of ECSSS church leaders, of the ongoing needs of our friends in both Sudan and South Sudan. It's this combination of ministries that define who we are.



What is noteworthy, as we and other partners come together in

advocacy meetings, conference calls from all corners of the Anglican Communion, and conferences, such as this 2016 conference, is the commitment which we share as faithful Christians, knowing that the message of forgiveness and reconciliation set forth by Jesus in the Gospels will prevail. We also realize that the journey may at times be perilous. We also share in the knowledge that we must be staunch and persistent advocates of that Gospel message if peace and reconciliation are to replace the culture of revenge that has brought such anguish to millions in both Sudans.

Faithfully, in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "C. Richard Parkins".

## SOME REFLECTIONS ON BEING IN THE DIOCESE OF NZARA, SOUTH SUDAN

THE REV. JEANIE SMITH, DEACON, ST. TIMOTHY'S, WEST DES MOINES, IOWA

I have now had two and a half months to begin to reflect on the journey four of us had the good fortune to take to the Diocese of Nzara, South Sudan, in February (2015). Our journey was sponsored by the Diocese of Iowa through the One World, One Church Commission. We went at the request of Bishop Samuel Peni to represent the Diocese of Iowa at the Standing Committee meeting of the Diocese of Nzara. My traveling companions were the Revs. Robert North (St. Mark's, Maquoketa), Mary Cole Duvall (St. Timothy's, West Des Moines), and Suzanne Peterson (Trinity, Waterloo). But, these reflections are my own.

We have a formal companion diocese relationship between Iowa and Nzara. When we have a relationship with someone, it implies that we know who the other is, and they know us. We spend time together. We learn that person's story, and they learn ours. The more intimate the relationship, the more time we spend together, the more we reveal of ourselves, the more vulnerable we are. When we are committed to a relationship, we nurture it and care for it – in good times and in bad.

If we are to form a relationship with people half a world away (not just in distance, but in language and customs and everyday life), we have to have the courage to put ourselves in their place, not only to hear their story from afar, but to see their story up close; and, perhaps, to expose some of the poverty of our own lives, as well. That's hard to do. But, we are called to it, not only by our diocesan relationship, but because they are, as we are, children of God. So how do we do that?

It seems to me that the first part is just being there and experiencing the reality of life as it is lived by these very special people. Of course, as honored guests, we didn't really experience the fullness of their lives. We were

given hot water every morning and evening with which we could rinse ourselves and "bathe." There were two or three oscillating electric fans, when they were there, and when the electricity was working. They were always pointed at us. We had plenty of bottled water. We never experienced hunger. We were never in danger. But we did get a taste of life as it is lived in Nzara, and what we experienced was a close-knit community that, of necessity, depends on each other for survival. They share what they have.

Bishop Samuel's brother visited one day, and the Bishop introduced him to us as "the son of my mother". We thought that a very strange way to speak of his brother and asked him why he didn't just introduce him as "my brother". He replied that all of these people surrounding him were his brothers and his sisters, but this particular person was related to him, because he was also the son of his mother. I thought that we, here in Iowa, might occasionally speak of "our brothers and sisters" when we are gathered together at a church function, but I'm not sure we really mean it. I think Bishop Samuel does.

I discovered that sometimes there's freedom in lack of choice. We westerners tend to think that having choices is a good thing, and the more choices the better. We forget that choices can sometimes be paralyzing. Choosing, itself, can take up a lot of our time. Sometimes when we have finally chosen, we begin to regret that we didn't make a different choice. That's a lot of energy! When there's no choice, we take what we are given with gratitude, because we are glad that we have something. God's story is frequently a story of privation – people wandering in the desert, hungry people by the side of a sea in Galilee. That's frequently the story of the people of Nzara, too. Our story is sometimes a story of privation, as well, but not for material goods, like food and water.

## SOME REFLECTIONS ON NZARA, cont'd.

No. Our privations are of the spirit. “Now that I have all this stuff, what am I to do with it? Why don't I feel good?” Can we, too, get to the place where we can learn from those who find joy with so little in material goods?

It seems to me that there is, in the Diocese of Nzara, a wholly different perspective regarding bad things that happen to good people. We, here, in this very rich country tend to think that our lives should just roll along, and everything should go well. When things don't go well, our tendency is to ask, “Why me?” Some of us wonder how a good God could let these awful things happen.

But, in South Sudan, where virtually everyone is beset by problems difficult for us even to imagine, it doesn't seem to me that people ask, “Why me?”, and wonder where God is. They accept that both good things and bad things are a part of life for everyone, and God is with

us through it all.

Bishop Samuel is always delighted to receive the gifts we bring -- T-shirts, dresses, soccer balls and uniforms for the children; vestments, altar hangings and bicycles for the clergy, on this trip. But, he doesn't easily see all that we get from him and from the South Sudanese people when we come to visit. These things aren't material. They are attitudinal and spiritual; the beauty of true community; the gladness of heart that we feel when we are greeted enthusiastically each day; the smiles and laughter. Simple pleasures? Yes. Simple to achieve? Maybe not so easy for us.

To read more reflections and view interesting photographs from the Nzara Companions trip to South Sudan visit Jeanie's blog at; <http://sttimsouthsudan.blogspot.com>

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JOIN US AT THE AFRECS CONFERENCE

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# EDUCATION - THE KEY TO BUILDING PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN

REV. DR. JOSEPH BILAL, PROJECT MANAGER, THE EPISCOPAL UNIVERSITY, JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN

I was born in a time of war. Grew up in a time of war. Married in a time of war. Had children in a time of war. My children have already felt the burn of the war, and I feel, why should I have to die in a time of war? What does it take to leave a good legacy for my children to pass on to their children? Surely, not violence.

The five decades of war and upheaval in South Sudan have done great damage to millions of lives, particularly among young people. They have nothing to inherit other than violence and strife within the community. This is contrary to what we see in other societies, especially in the West, where children inherit from their parents and grandparents good values of life: democracy, freedom, good governance, good education, good health care services, and good economic development.

This means I have to invest more of my time than ever before on peace advocacy, peace-building and peace education to change the negative conflict and violence narrative to a positive and peaceful narrative in our country.

As an executive board member of the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission (JPRC), a department within the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan (ECSSS), I believe the Commission has taken the right approach to begin addressing the problem.

With limited resources and support received from good friends and well wishers — Sudan Relief Agency (SUDRA) and AFRECS, and a few dedicated and committed volunteers — JPRC has accomplished and achieved its goal and vision, which is to seek an end to wars and conflict in the two Sudans.

In the area of peace advocacy, in February 2016, JPRC

conducted a two-day neutral intellectual forum bringing together very influential and dynamic church and government personnel, bishops, government ministers, MPs, university professors, lecturers, senior military and organized forces officers. About 62 people from diverse communities and different churches (although the majority were Episcopal) attended the conference. The Commission plans to conduct the next forum in October this year.

In the area of peace-building, in 2014 and 2015, the Commission conducted a series of community-based workshops in peace-building, healing, and reconciliation bringing together various divided ethnic groups and tribes, including youth, chiefs, women, church leaders, state executives and legislators in three different states—Jonglei (Bor and Poktap), Western Equatoria (Yambio and Maridi), and Central Equatoria (Juba). JPRC plans to hold a three-day prayer and fasting convocation in November 2016.

The Commission has trained the ECSSS House of Bishops in trauma healing, reconciliation, and advocacy. Also, through Bishop Gwynne College, JPRC has trained practicing pastors and college students in peace values, life skills and knowledge, and conflict resolution. The Commission hopes to offer this program to all ages across the country. South Sudan needs a culture of peace taught in classrooms. I, therefore, appeal to our friends to pray for us, strategically, to support our capacity-building project to employ 3 permanent staff.

I don't want to die in war and have my children and grandchildren inherit violence; that is my prayer and vision. But, peace education is the key to lasting peace in South Sudan.

# TEU OF SOUTH SUDAN AND SUDAN NEWSLETTER, SEPTEMBER 12, 2016, ISSUE NO. 1: CREATING A UNIVERSITY IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT

REV. DR. JOSEPH BILAL, PROJECT MANAGER

If we want South Sudan to be stable and prosperous, we must invest in the education of its people in all levels. To make this happen in the present face of continuous conflict requires commitment, dedication and sacrifice. We need to be optimistic that wars and violence must not get in the way of investing in skills development in higher education and employment.

In 2013, the National Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNSECO put South Sudan's literacy rate at 27%, making the new nation one of the least literate in the world. Looking at this rate it is worth saying that the poverty of mind is more dangerous than the material poverty. The less literate we are, the worse we sink into the whirlwind of ignorance and conflict.

In October 2014, the survey taken by Save the Children observed that children, parents and community leaders affected by the crisis in South Sudan say 'education is their number one priority'. In fact, they rate it top over other needs such as food, water and shelter. One of the parents was quoted to say 'I am not educated and this makes me vulnerable. The only thing we want is for our children to learn so they are not vulnerable like us'. This means that education is key to fighting ignorance, insecurity, corruption, tribalism, gender based and sexual violence, and early marriages among many other things. Education is in the centre of peace building in South Sudan.

We are excited that our plans for the University have received overwhelming approval and rating, 9 out of 10 people we ask say we should open it now rather than later. Despite the recent fighting which erupted on 8th

to 11th July 2016, our university plans are on going. The security situation did not put the project on hold. We are getting on with the implementation of the action plan as recommended by the stakeholders consultation meeting held on 15th -16th April 2016. The report of the meeting is out and distributed to members. We have created the university website and logo, proposed the overall organisation chart, governing structure and map out the

foundation programme courses and its implementation. The foundation programme draft is under review and discussion.

In the next three months until Christmas, we plan to prepare first draft simple budget, which will be reviewed by the Project Management Board (PMB) and ECSSUP (partners) and to kick-start phase 1 of our fun-

draising plan. The budget includes employment of four additional staff to run the university office, sum amount for transport cost and government fees for land survey and fees for the National Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to inspect the would-be university colleges. In addition, the proposed task force and the PMB will hold its first meeting to review the curriculum development and identify extra resources to deliver the curricula and agree on a launch date for the foundation programme.

We request your action to support us financially wherever you can and to pray for us as we embrace and embark to fully implement this exciting and important university project when the security situation is more peaceful. God bless you all.



## FIRST TIME VISITOR'S IMPRESSIONS OF SOUTH SUDAN

STEVEN MILES, BOARD MEMBER OF AFRECS



**W**e were in. After shuffling and scrutinizing our passports, letters of invitation and other documents, the UN guard waived us past the barbed wire fence and into the UNMISS, (UN Mission in South Sudan) camp for internally displaced persons outside of Juba. Passing through the checkpoint, we were welcomed by a choir of dozens of orphaned children singing hymns and dancing, escorting us through the camp to a large open-air tent where an ecumenical Christian service was already under way. <https://youtu.be/x04W46FmTx0> & <https://youtu.be/2yyViIXcIuw> The next three hours were, perhaps, the highlight of our trip.

Richard Parkins, AFRECS Exec. Dir., Rev. Ranjit Mathews, Officer for Global Relations & Networking, TEC, and myself were escorted by Bishop John Gatteck (Bentiu) and Nuer clergy of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and South Sudan (ECSSS) into the camp to worship with fellow Christians in the UNMISS camp. We listened to their stories of escape and deprivation, joined with them in their prayers for peace, and began thinking of how we could help meet their humanitar-

ian need for used clothing and their request for Nuer-language bibles. And then, still glowing from the beauty and reverence of the service, we were shocked by the reality of the violence and capriciousness of life in South Sudan. The daily battle between good and evil is hard to miss in South Sudan. But, more about that later in this story.

Richard, Ranjit and I visited Juba June 27-July 5 to meet with ECSSS clergy and staff, the South Sudan Council of Churches, and representatives of various NGOs, USAID and other groups active in trying to help the people of South Sudan. The purpose of our trip was primarily educational and reconnaissance – how can AFRECS and other Episcopal institutions focus and leverage their limited resources to bring the greatest benefit to the people and the ECSSS? For Richard, this was the latest of several trips he has made to South Sudan. Ranjit was making his second trip. I was the rookie.

We were invited to South Sudan by the Justice, Peace & Reconciliation Commission (JPRC). The Commission, chaired by ECSSS Bishop Samuel Peni

## FIRST TIME VISITOR'S IMPRESSIONS, con't.

(Nzara), ably assisted by Rev. Joseph Bilal, strives to bring together the warring tribes in South Sudan, primarily Dinka and Nuer, which conflict has caused constant violence and destruction since December 15, 2013. With very limited resources (the JPRC has no full-time staff, no facilities, and no means of transport), the Commission has made important contributions to the peace and reconciliation effort. Notably, the JPRC recently led a five-day trip to Rwanda with leaders from the conflict groups. There they learned from Rwandan survivors of the genocide about how Rwanda has come to terms with their own violent tribal conflict and begun the healing process through reconciliation. On another occasion, the Commission convened a one-day symposium in Juba for leading intellectuals in South Sudan to come together and talk about reconciliation.

To fully appreciate the importance, and urgency, of the JPRC's work, one must consider the context of daily life in South Sudan. Civil society is close to collapse. Since the beginning of the year, inflation has run at 300%, and the currency (South Sudanese Pound) has been devalued by 84%. (As a real world example, the cost of a night at the ECSSS Guest House, when paid in US dollars, has fallen from \$100 to about \$11 in SSP). Doctors, lawyers and teachers are on strike. The government has not paid its own employees in months. A senior advisor in the Ministry of Education told us, as he accepted our pizza leftovers to take home to his children, when he is paid it is the equivalent of about \$6 a month for a family of nine people. As a result of the political stalemate and the endemic violence, there is very little economic activity. (A situation exacerbated after we left by the evacuation from South Sudan of Ugandans, who owned many of the small businesses and food shops). Meanwhile, the country is awash with armed groups, uniformed and not. With hunger pervasive and so few other opportunities, violence and theft seem to be the leading forms of economic activity.



To be fair, there is a heroic effort underway to bring food relief to the 4.5 million people whom the UN estimates are at risk of starvation (out of a population of 11 million). On arrival in Juba, we witnessed a tarmac clotted with Hercules-size aircraft bringing relief supplies. UN, UNICEF, World Food Program, ICRC, Oxfam, Doctors without Borders all had jumbo-sized jets and large staffs (in compounds) focused on delivering supplies to the people of South Sudan.

We met with representatives of the Tear Fund, a UK charitable organization that delivers some \$45 million of relief supplies into South Sudan annually. After getting supplies into their warehouse in Juba, Tear Fund employees load them onto trucks that drive to the airport, where they are flown to remote cities and towns in South Sudan. From there, supplies are trucked further to even more remote towns and villages; however, the trucks need to travel in convoys to reduce the risk that local bandits will hijack the truck and steal it and its contents.

Many of the drivers and other aid workers, both South Sudanese and expatriate, put their lives at risk to deliver supplies in a land awash with guns, but short of opportunity. (Shortly after we left, violence erupted

## FIRST TIME VISITOR'S IMPRESSIONS, con't.

again in several states and cities across South Sudan, including Juba. We have heard reports that aid workers were particularly targeted and robbed or subjected to violence. Some of the NGO relief supply warehouses were stripped of every single item by robbers, including equipment for delivering supplies. The ECSSS Guest House where we stayed reportedly had its electric generator stolen, depriving those displaced Bishops and others at the Guest House of any electricity, which had been available only four hours each day before we left.

As one impressive example, Five Talents and the Mothers Union have combined efforts to teach literacy and micro-enterprise to thousands of South Sudanese women. But, without resolution of the underlying conflict, all gains are imperiled.

The focus on food relief is indicative of a bigger problem. We repeatedly heard of governments and NGOs shifting their resources away from economic development and reform towards emergency food relief programs. In many ways, this is analogous to eating one's seed corn. It may solve the feeding problem for this day, this week, or even this month. But, governmental and NGO efforts to develop opportunities and make South Sudan's society and economy more sustainable have largely been suspended or terminated. Indeed, in a meeting at the US Embassy in Juba, representatives of USAID told us that it had turned back their development funds to Congress, as they could not find meaningful opportunities for investment in the current economic, political and security environment in South Sudan.

Instead, USAID has decided that the best use of its resources is to promote truth and reconciliation. The hope is that truth and reconciliation will lead to peace, and peace will lead to a return of internally displaced persons to their farmland and homes, hopefully produc-

ing both security and economic activity. Recognizing that "the churches are the only institutions in South Sudan that still have credibility", USAID has issued a \$6 million, two-year grant to the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) to develop the "Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan" program. The program is being managed for SSCC by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), which has contributed an additional \$2 million. It will draw upon the best talents and resources of the ECSSS, JPRC, CRS and comparable groups from other major churches in South Sudan. In its preliminary action plan, the SSCC has the JPRC penciled in to lead the "Neutral Forum" portion of the program. The other two components are "Advocacy" and "Reconciliation". The ECSSS, with JPRC as potential leader of the Neutral Forum, would be expected to "bring together stakeholders to discuss the root causes of the conflict, envision the future of the Nation, and identify indigenous solutions to the conflict". The ultimate goals of the Neutral Forum process include improving "communication and understanding" among the conflict parties and restoring "trust and relationships among the conflict parties at all levels". SSCC has budgeted \$2.89 million of their funds from USAID and CRS to this Neutral Forum exercise.

In our meetings with USAID, SSCC, CRS and major NGOs, it became apparent to us that the Reconciliation for Peace program is perhaps the "last best hope" for restoring security and opportunity for the people of South Sudan. However, the human and logistical infrastructure needed to carry out this program are lacking. Rev. John Daau, Episcopal priest working for CRS on the Reconciliation for Peace program, himself one of the "Lost Boys" from Kakuma Refugee Camp, stressed to us and Bishop Peni that the JPRC is not yet ready to assume the responsibilities tentatively allocated to it under the Reconciliation for Peace program. Rev. Daau pointedly noted that the ECSSS does not have a

## FIRST TIME VISITOR'S IMPRESSIONS, con't.

single full-time employee or professional staff member, and that Bishop Peni and Rev. Bilal have other full-time responsibilities in Nzara and elsewhere. To play a role in the Reconciliation for Peace effort and receive their portion of the USAID grant, ECSSS would need to build professional capacity within the Commission. This would entail hiring a program director, financial manager (to ensure compliance with USAID accounting rules), and full-time field officer. Together with upfront capital costs for two cars and office equipment, Bishop Peni estimated that the first year all-in expense to get the JPRC into position to play a leading role in this USAID-funded effort would cost about \$160,000.

This amount of funding, while sizable, does not seem insurmountable, particularly when compared to the costs of feeding and other relief programs. On the one hand, raising \$160,000 may serve as a fulcrum that enables the ECSSS to receive an estimated \$2.89 million in peacemaking funding from USAID/SSCC. However, the more valuable benefit is that by building capacity at ECSSS for peace and reconciliation efforts, we are strengthening the Church and supporting its efforts to bring peace to South Sudan.

Which leads us back to the UNMISS camp and the joy of our celebration with those in the camp. They fervently asked us to help them by supplying used clothing for the children there who wore no clothes, by delivering Nuer-language bibles, and through prayers (and advocacy in Washington) for peace. When we stepped out of the camp, however, Sebit, the ECSSS driver, who had been waiting for us was nowhere to be found. Sebit had been attacked by someone “who ran out of the bush” and hit him on the head with a machete, seriously injuring him. His attacker had spelled some acronym (the meaning unknown to us or others we asked) in Sebit’s blood on the window of the car and taken off with a backpack and wallet. We met with Sebit in the

hospital, stayed with him, ensured he was seen by a competent physician, and helped pay for his care.

During our time in South Sudan, Richard, Ranjit and I witnessed remarkable acts by relief workers, clergy, and others, showing that God’s Love is alive and working in what is, otherwise, a desperate situation. But, these individuals are fighting a tide of hopelessness and despair. With so little trust and understanding among the conflicting parties, so little other opportunity and so much violence, peace and reconciliation may be the last best hope, AND an area where, as Christians, we can make a difference.

*Steven Miles is a member of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, McLean, VA. He can be reached at [smiles3@cox.net](mailto:smiles3@cox.net).*



*Steven Miles, Ranjit Mathews, Florence & Tear Fund staff, Richard Parkins and Bishop Samuel Peni. Photo by Steven Miles.*

## FROM FERRUM, VA TO WAU, SOUTH SUDAN

DR. SUSAN MEAD, ASST. PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY, FERRUM COLLEGE

How can it be that I left South Sudan four months ago? The months since I returned are equal to the time I was there, but my desire to be in the newest nation of the world has not diminished. In fact, just yesterday, as I walked onto the lush green lawn for Ferrum College's opening conference, I was immediately transported to walking across the dust dry Wau Cathedral compound to meet my first class at St. John's College — to meet the faces of Christ proclaiming His good news throughout the Western Bahr el Ghazal region — and beyond. Those eager students were incredulous that “Dr. Susan” had come so far to be with them, to share her knowledge of her field of Sociology, and to teach and to learn peace-building strategies with them. I do not think these theology students knew they were part of a dream: not only the dream that Bishop Moses Deng Bol of Wau has for South Sudanese pastors of different tribes to be living and studying together, but also a dream of mine to visit the people and the land loved so by the Rev. Marc Nikkel, a dream that began 23 years ago when I heard Marc speak at the 1993 Annual Council of the Diocese of Southwestern VA.

Surely, students and I had our challenges adapting to each other, through language and skills levels and cultural differences, but the respect and love that developed was palpable. I asked the first and second year students to do a presentation for visiting bishops about forgiveness in the spirit Bishop Tutu's The Book of Forgiving: The Four Fold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World. Each student was to link the idea of forgiveness to one class they had taken in their first two years at St. John's (not just Old and New Testament, but even to computer class, a class on HIV/AIDS, Writing and Study Skills, and English!). The rule was they had to do it in just ONE minute, no more. They thought I was crazy. “We must have three minutes at least!” I said, “No, because I know how long your stories can get!” When they accomplished the goal in the required time, and showcased their critical thinking skills

beyond what they imagined possible, we all glowed with the knowledge that we had given glory to God in a way that Bishop Samuel Peni, Provincial Chair of the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission, said he had never seen college students do. These same students went on to create peace-building plans for their home communities and churches—ones that they could implement when they returned home for the summer. They overcame much to receive much, and to give much in return.

Once logistics got worked out and schools at all levels were fully opened in February, I spent each Monday through Wednesday with the students of St. John's College, and then went across the city of Wau on Thursdays and Fridays to be with the children at Clement Mboro Primary School. We quickly learned there that throwing the kawajah (white foreigner—a term I accepted with great affection) into the lower grade classrooms of about 50-60 students was not so productive. The language barrier prevented us from doing much more than playing games and singing songs. But, the P6 and P7 classes were different. We bonded and schemed, and yes, sang and danced, as well. The traditional “This Little Light of Mine” (with a few extra verses) and Earth, Wind, and Fire's “Shining Star” were favorites and thematically perfect.

When I asked what the P7 class wanted to do before graduation next year, they came up with the idea to create a “Peace Day”. Through group work and consensus (which seemed like new concepts), they developed a plan to sing songs and share food that showcased the beauty of different tribes bringing them into unity as South Sudanese. They decided to write their politicians at every level to ask for peace and to invite them to the Peace Day. They came up with a very creative name for their group, “The International Grieving Peace Dogs”, artistically rendered elements of a future logo, and contributed many factual and fictional details that would go into a children's book that I hope to write about Clement Mboro students plan-

## FROM FERRUM, VA TO WAU, SOUTH SUDAN, con't.

ning a Peace Day. The younger students in P5 contributed by writing a series of haiku stanzas about peace to be read at the ceremony. After talking to administrators, the day was set and the committees formed. This would take place on Clement Mboro Day, July 7, 2017, if the people on the ground kept their commitments. And, Dr. Susan would try her best to return.

I left Wau on April 20, and departed from Juba the morning of April 26, coincidentally, the same day SPLA-IO leader and 1st V.P. Riek Machar returned in the afternoon. On the way home, I spent a week in Kenya visiting a very special group of 20 South Sudanese children in need of our support. Their foster father, Rev. Peter Youl Gur, was elected Bishop of Tonj Area Diocese. I learned quickly how beloved Bishop Peter is by his people as I witnessed his election in Tonj, his consecration in Wau, and his triumphant return to Tonj, where he would begin building the Diocese from scratch. In the Diocesan compound, where many people live, there is one latrine hole, but no structure.

I also learned what an unimaginable challenge it is to be a Bishop in South Sudan: NO salary; NO budget. Everything your diocese is, and will ever hope to be, is in your hands alone, with divine guidance and the human partnerships you cultivate. You have to give up whatever supplemental job you may have had previously in order to serve God in this calling. (Priests are not paid either, so to support their families they have to look outside the church). So, my last week in Africa was spent in Kitale, Kenya, with 20 kids whose own parents are not present to support them, along with Bishop Peter, his wife and infant son, and his mother in the three-bedroom house they rent so that the children have shelter. Some were going to school while others were on break from boarding school.

Now that Peter is Bishop, it falls to me, considered the Bishop's elder sister, to make sure the roof stays over these children's heads. The kids go to school in Kenya because

the South Sudanese schools are so unpredictable. I know this to be true because Clement Mboro School had a shortage of qualified teachers, closed early every day, and at times, was not in session at all. This is because of ongoing "insecurities" and economic strife, such as inflation doubling while I was there and increasing armed violence, even then. The children teach one another. They lead devotions every night. I miss them so.

Two months after I returned, I was sitting in a classroom at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., at a seminar on religion's role in preventing and healing from genocide. As we were studying about the atrocities in Cambodia and Rwanda, I began to get texts from a student in Wau about the terror they were experiencing from individuals and groups armed with tanks and guns. They were running for their lives. If they were able to return home, there was nothing left after the looting. They were eating leaves off the trees.

The next week, Juba was in chaos with death and destruction. The Guest House where I had stayed adjacent to the Cathedral in Juba was now home to thousands of displaced persons. I was in disbelief. Even with occasional insecurities and gunshots in the distance, I had never once, not for a second, felt afraid. My mantra to anyone who would listen was that we must stop focusing on the tragic and the negative, and lift up the amazing, hopeful, resilience I saw in my students at St. John's, in the hundreds of people at the Dinka, English and Arabic services at Wau Cathedral compound and the Nuer and Pentecostal Churches I was invited to visit, and in the 484 souls confirmed by Bishop Moses in one church many hours away from the main road as we traveled through Tonj.

Was I just blessed to have found a window of peace in the four months I chose to be in South Sudan after 23 years of waiting? Is Marc Nikkel's call "to love and serve" in the way he did my call too? As much as I want to be back, could I go now? I know that present family obligations

## FROM FERRUM, VA TO WAU, SOUTH SUDAN, con't.

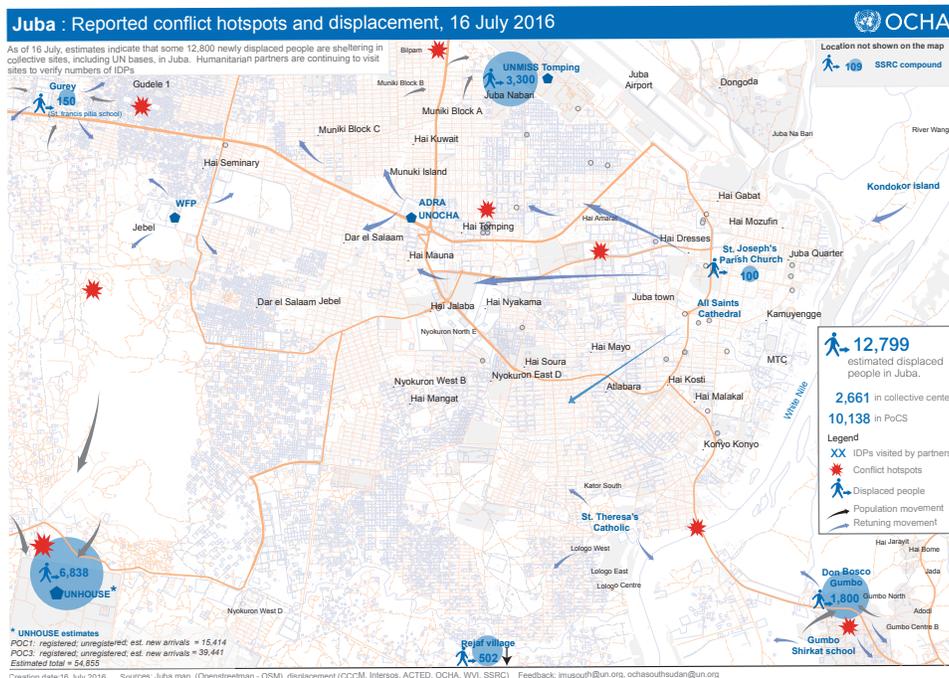
keep me from returning. I cannot be there like he was, making an impact on so many individuals. No matter where I went, I found people who had known and been influenced by my mentor, Marc Nikkel.

Perhaps, for now, I can only email, What's App, Skype and Text with my dear ones there. But, I will go back. I still have hopes to be at the Clement Mboro Peace Day in 2017. In the meantime, just like for the past 23 years, I have work to do. I will start my non-profit, Diversity Serves, to raise funds for the many projects that were initiated while I was there. I will speak to churches and civic groups about my experiences and find ways to create partnerships with them. I will find new projects for the youth at my parish, St. Peter's-in-the-Mountains in Callaway, VA, to continue to make an impact like they did when they funded solar training for over 40 South Sudanese providing light for St. John's Library. I will be a part of the 2016 Marc Nikkel services Sept. 4th at R.E. Lee Memorial, the parish of my youth in Lexington, VA. Special guest will be the Rev. James Baak whom I met in Wau after speaking at the Cathedral one day, and who came to me in tears because

Marc had supported and deeply touched his life. And, I will continue to be a part of our local South Sudanese faith community every Sunday because they have sustained me before, during, and since my trip.

My life's mission now is in "connecting diverse communities through creating sustainable partnerships for cultivating prosperity and peace". My time in South Sudan put my feet firmly in the path that was already forming. I give thanks to God for the opportunity to realize my dream, and to all family members and friends, supporters of the people of South Sudan, and my institution, Ferrum College, for making it possible. We have a long way to go on this road, and it may be as rocky as the road from Wau to Juba. Yet, if my brothers and sisters in Christ can endure what they have for decades, and again over the last month, I certainly can endure the hardships I face in creating ways for us to focus on and facilitate the hope that IS South Sudan.

*Dr. Mead attends St. Peter's-in-the-Mountains, Callaway, VA, and is a member of AFRECS. She can be reached at [s.mead@ferrum.edu](mailto:s.mead@ferrum.edu)*



## SOUTH SUDAN FOOD SECURITY ALERT

FROM FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK, WWW.FEWS.NET

*Drastic food price increases further reduce household food access.*

Trade to and within South Sudan has been severely disrupted following renewed conflict in and around Juba, greatly reducing food supplies on most markets. As a result, staple food prices increased drastically between June and July, reaching more than 10 times the five-year average on a number of key markets. These price spikes come at the peak of the lean season when most households have depleted their food stocks and are dependent on market purchases to access food. Even before the July

price spikes, much of South Sudan was facing crisis and emergency acute food insecurity. Given these extremely high food prices, it is likely that food security is deteriorating even more than previously anticipated. Immediate humanitarian assistance and improved access for commercial trade are required to save lives.

Read more at [www.fews.net/east/africa/South-Sudan](http://www.fews.net/east/africa/South-Sudan).

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## ZERO DRAFT COMMUNIQUE OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE IGAD PLUS ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTH SUDAN

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the IGAD Plus held a Summit meeting on 5th August 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and deliberated on the prevailing situation in South Sudan.

The meeting was chaired by H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and current Chairperson of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government. (International Authority on Development)

The fifteen Heads of State and Government of the IGAD Plus concurred on 20 statements. Among them: 18. Appeals to the international community and humanitar-

ian agencies to continue assisting the affected populations in South Sudan by strengthening their presence and mobilizing requisite resources for the 6.1 million South Sudanese that need humanitarian assistance including the 1.6 million internally displaced and 900,000 refugees in the neighboring countries, and in this connection, demands the parties to guarantee safe humanitarian corridors for passage of displaced communities and delivery of humanitarian supplies.

Go to [www.afrecs.org/IGAD\\_Communique\\_8.5.16.pdf](http://www.afrecs.org/IGAD_Communique_8.5.16.pdf) to read the complete Zero Draft Communique.

# A MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP DANIEL DENG BUL YAK

AN EXCERPT FROM A LETTER TO PRESIDENT SALVA KIIR

Therefore, it is disheartening to see our people being killed and thousands being displaced once again and for them to be exposed to hunger, diseases and poverty. According to our assessment over 41,000 people were displaced from their homes around Juba. This figure may increase or decrease based on the security situation.

As a church we stand ready to support the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) in promoting and advocating for peace, forgiveness, reconciliation and justice. We stand in solidarity with the families of innocent civilians who have been killed, raped or tortured and fell victims of political differences on issues of number of states, cantonment sites and selection of the Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly as clear examples.

We call upon the international community and humanitarian agencies to provide food and non-food items to those affected in Juba, Wau and other places in the country. We urge the warring parties to respect the ceasefire and maintain peace and stability.

We call upon South Sudanese to refrain from violence as taught and practiced by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he says: *'If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'* (Mt.18:15-16). Also Jesus said: *'Judas are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" And one of them struck the servant of the High Priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him'* (Lk.22: 48-51). Let us use methods of non-violence when we are calling and seeking for justice. Let us use peaceful means to resolve any conflict in our beloved country of South Sudan as done by Prime Minister Mahatma Gandhi in India and President Nelson Mandela in South Africa. May God's grace and peace be with you all!



The Most Rev. Canon Daniel Deng Bul Yak

Archbishop, Primate and Metropolitan of the Province of Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan & Bishop of Juba Diocese.



## COMINGS & GOINGS, ETC.

*O God, surround those who travel in Your service, with Your loving care; protect them from every danger; bring them safely to their journey's end, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### OCT. 11 – NOV. 21

Bishop Joseph Garang Atem, Diocese of Renk, makes his annual visit to the U.S., along with his wife, Roda Samuel Chol. They will arrive in the Diocese of VA to meet with partner churches, and government offices in Washington, DC, from Oct. 11-17, when they travel to Renk's Companion Diocese, Chicago, to visit partners, and St. Paul's Church by-the-Lake, Sudanese congregation, Oct. 17-Nov. 21. Contact: Jackie Kraus, [jackie.kraus41@gmail.com](mailto:jackie.kraus41@gmail.com)

### OCT. 20 – NOV. 8

Bishop Samuel Enosa Peni, Diocese of Nzara, and Chair of the Justice, Peace & Reconciliation Commission, visits Companion Diocese, Iowa. He will meet with partners throughout the Diocese. Nov. 3, he travels to Washington, DC, to meet with US Institute of Peace, USAID and St. Paul's Sudanese congregation, Alexandria, VA. Contact Ray Gaebler, [raygaebler@mchsi.com](mailto:raygaebler@mchsi.com)

### OCT. 21 – OCT. 23 WEST DES MOINES, IA

Annual AFRECS Conference, *"Building Bridges of Reconciliation"*, West Des Moines Marriott, IA. Closing Eucharist will be at Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Des Moines, IA. Register online at [www.afrecs.org](http://www.afrecs.org), or download the form and mail to AFRECS, 3737 Seminary Rd., Alexandria, VA 22304. Questions about the Conference? Contact Ray Gaebler, [AFRECSconference2016@mediacombb.net](mailto:AFRECSconference2016@mediacombb.net). Bishop Alan Scarfe writes, *"We are honored as a Diocese to be hosting the American Friends of the Episcopal Church of the Sudans. It is my hope that we will show our support to the people of South Sudan and Sudan by our participation. One way or another, I ask for your ongoing prayers for the people of South Sudan, in particular, including our companions in Nzara. News continues to be grave from that region, and we are privileged to*

*be invited to share their burden as best we are able."* (Excerpted from Bishop Scarfe's letter to the Diocese of Iowa.)

## AFRECS ANNOUNCES ADDITIONS TO THE BOARD



*The Rev. Shirley Smith Grabam* is Rector of Christ Church, Glen Allen, VA. Shirley graduated, Cum Laude, from VTS, and is completing a D. Min. at the University of the South. She taught Greek and Hebrew at Renk Theological College in Jan. 2006, as a Visiting Teacher sponsored by Duke Divinity School and Virginia Theological Seminary.

*Bradshaw Langmaid, Jr.* has 31 years experience designing and managing foreign assistance projects and programs for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), two years as Sr. V.P. for International Programs of a private voluntary organization (PVO). He has worked with Save the Children, World Learning and the Institute for International Economics, and is currently consultant on international development. Brad is a graduate of Harvard, Cum Laude Government, and has two Masters of Arts degrees in International Economics from Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy. He joins the Board as Treasurer.

## COMINGS AND GOINGS, ETC., con't.



### SUFFRAGAN BISHOP OF DORKING: RT. REV. JO BAILEY WELLS

From: Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, March 24, 2016: The Queen has approved the nomination of the Rev. Canon Jo Bailey Wells for election as Suffragan Bishop of Dorking in the Diocese of Guildford. Bishop Wells was consecrated at Canterbury Cathedral, June 29 by Archbishop Justin Welby. She was educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, U. of Minnesota, and ordained at St. John's College, Durham. She served

as Chaplain to the Archbishop prior to becoming Bishop. While Dir. of Anglican Episcopal House of Studies and Assoc. Prof. of Bible and Ministry at Duke Div. School, she spent a significant portion of her annual leave in East Africa, supporting then Bishop Daniel Deng Bul (now Primate) and Bishop Joseph Garang Atem through the Visiting Teachers Program at Renk Theological College. [www.canterbury-cathedral.org/2016/06/30/bishop](http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/2016/06/30/bishop)



*Professor Jo Baily Wells at Renk Theological College, 2006.*

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## ANGLICAN ALLIANCE RESPONDS TO URGENT APPEAL FROM SUDRA

In partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD), Anglican Alliance is responding to an urgent appeal from ECSSS-Sudanese Development & Relief Agency (SUDRA) for 93,882 people affected by the recent insecurity in S. Sudan –Kajokeji, Yei, Lainya, Rejaf and Juba.

In Juba, tens of thousands of people have been uprooted. They run into the bushes. They seek refuge in the nearby

churches, and in two UNMISS Camps in Juba. Over 40,000 have been displaced. Markets, shops, stores and homes have been either looted or destroyed. There is scarcity of food in Juba.

SUDRA is calling for prayer and support of the innocent victims in South Sudan, victims of a struggle for power and greed. "God has heard my cry, have you heard it, too?" Go to <https://anglicanalliance.org/news/> to learn more. And, respond!