

A Message of Hope in Dark Times from AFRECS Executive Director, Richard Parkins:

Dear Friends,

As we absorb news of the horrific loss and suffering that has occurred in nearly six weeks of violent civil conflict in South Sudan, we must not allow our despair and sadness to diminish the hopefulness that has been so essential to the work which so many have done in journeying with our Sudanese friends in creating an independent nation. There are reasons to be hopeful.

I was reminded this past Sunday when AFRECS board member and former volunteer in mission for The Episcopal Church, Ross Kane, recalled in a sermon the Wanlit accords that were painstakingly negotiated 15 years ago involving the Dinka and Nuer tribes. While some are prone to speak of the inevitability of ethnic/tribal conflict, there is a precedent for inter-tribal peace making and reconciliation which held for many years. It may have endured had not political leaders exploited latent ethnic tension for political gain. It is the spirit of Wanlit that needs to be revived, nurtured, and enhanced as we think of what lies ahead for South Sudan.

There is general consensus that the churches will be expected to encourage and lead peace making efforts. If such a role is conferred upon them, let it be understood that their credibility and legitimacy as peacemakers needs to be accompanied by considerable expertise in the field of conflict resolution and reconciliation. This expertise along with the resources to mobilize a comprehensive, nationwide program will be needed to produce enduring results. May we pray for enduring results.

Faithfully,

Richard Parkins

South Sudan

[The United States Institute of Peace](#) recently posted an article entitled, 'South Sudan's Religious Unity Can Help Heal Wounds of Violence' which refers to the same 1999 Wanlit peace and reconciliation conference that is cited in the above message. In part, the article reads, "Religious leaders traditionally have played a unifying role in southern Sudan since the 1965 formation of the Sudan Council of Churches.... In 1999, religious leaders helped shepherd the historic civilian peace and reconciliation [conference](#) in Wunlit, Bahr El Ghazal. That meeting brought together Dinka and Nuer groups who had been fighting each other on the West Bank of the Nile River in the face of a common enemy, the northern government in Sudan. After the conference, clergy helped solidify the new unity with a grassroots dialogue in places like Jonglei state in the east." The article concludes by saying, "Religious leaders witness on a daily basis the devastating effects of violence on lives and livelihoods, and can help leaders and citizens walk the path back to reconciliation and forgiveness. They are powerful forces for encouraging their flocks to stop the cycle of violence and retaliation, and instead focus on restoring relationships and rebuilding fragile trust."

[Anglican Communion News Service](#) reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, will visit South Sudan and three other countries in the Great Lakes Region to meet their Primates. This five-day visit to the area begins tomorrow (Thursday, 1/30/14) in an effort to express solidarity...and lay the foundation for good collaboration over the coming years. During his first 18 months in office, the Archbishop plans to visit all of the Primates around the Anglican Communion.

[African Arguments](#) published a detailed analysis of the current conflict in yesterday's post, under the title 'South Sudan: Not Just another War and another Peace in Africa'. The article examines the multilateral nature of this conflict, rather than seeing it only from two sides - the government and the opposition.

Makakal, the capital of Upper Nile State, was heavily damaged during the violence that broke out on December 15 in Juba and spread to other parts of the country. Follow this link for a story from the [Catholic Radio](#) Network; another link to see an [aerial photo](#) of the destruction; and another to read an article from [the Niles](#) weekly wrap-up. The last article reports that Medecins Sans Frontieres, the only aid organization left in Malakal, was forced to evacuate when their compound was looted. Fortunately, ECSS&S Bp Hilary Garang and his family were able to escape. He writes [this report](#) of the tragic events.

See the [Links page](#) on the AFRECS website for more recent news on South Sudan, including: Sudan Sunrise Newsletter; a call from USAID for humanitarian access throughout South Sudan; an article by John Prendergast entitled 'Second Chance at Building a State in South Sudan'; and snapshots from the Satellite Sentinel Project. Also on this page, you will find another Lent Course presented by the Diocese of Wau.

Editor's Note: Many thanks to my colleague Debra Morris Smith for taking on the duties of the editor's desk while I was away last fall teaching at the Bishop Gwynne College in Juba. I remain very grateful. Ellen J. Hanckel, Editor

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 @afrecs.org](mailto:info@afrecs.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 ECSSS entities that can provide direct help to the people most in need.

If you have received this eblast in a forwarded message, you may [sign up here to subscribe](#). Then you will receive them from AFRECS on a regular bi-weekly schedule.

Copyright © 2014 American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan, All rights reserved.

This bi-weekly Sudan update is from the American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan. You are receiving it because you are currently on an AFRECS listserv. Feel free to forward this newsflash to others who may find it helpful.