

AFRECS E-Blast: October 9, 2013

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In the church:

A CHANCE TO UNDERSTAND AND TO RESPOND: A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins

Even as we prepared for our seventh national conference, the American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan (AFRECS) receives very troubling messages about the tenuous situation in Abyei, serious disturbances along the so called demilitarized border, intertribal conflicts in Jonglei, the relentless bombardment of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, and the brutal suppression of protests by those speaking out against Khartoum's tyranny in Darfur and Khartoum itself.

We are hopeful that the [AFRECS conference](#) October 18-20 in Chicago would be an occasion for gaining greater understanding of these crises, particularly since they receive scant attention by the mainstream media even though they have a painfully long history with devastating humanitarian consequences. The conference is also a place where folks not only can gain knowledge of these crises but join friends in expressing solidarity with our Sudanese sisters and brothers as they struggle to achieve the peace which has been too long in coming.

Bishops from the dioceses of Nzara, Renk, Kadugli and Kajo Keji will be principal presenters at the conference. Each has a unique story to tell. Their messages will frame much of the discussion of the conference. Their reflections will be followed by presentations from Brian D'Silva, a distinguished public servant with years of experience working in various capacities in both Sudans. Brian currently serves as a consultant to the Government of South Sudan. Ambassador Dane Smith, formerly the US Government's key person in the Office of the Special Envoy for Darfur, will share reflections with us about this part of Sudan where peace never seems to come.

The Episcopal Church (TEC) plays an important role in assisting the Episcopal Church of Sudan (ECS). Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) will relay something of its work in cultivating a provincial community health education initiative. TEC staff will also lift up the importance of the life of the ECS to The Episcopal Church in the U.S. Also, as theological education is a vital part of the rebuilding of South Sudan and the ECS, a discussion of theological education led by Dr. Eeva John, a noted theological educator from the UK, will discuss prospects for enhanced theological education in South Sudan.

Those within our own network and colleagues from overseas will describe their own partnerships with ECS dioceses and offer the challenge of companionship to others who will hopefully reach out to the many dioceses in South Sudan and the two in Sudan who so earnestly desire a connection with a US diocese or parish.

A core piece of the AFRECS mission is advocacy on behalf of the ECS and our brothers and sisters who depend on our voices to inform US policy makers about the current situation in both Sudans for which both the US and the international community will respond more vigorously. The accounts that have been shared by our Sudanese church leaders become the grist of the message that must be delivered to decision makers worldwide, whose influence and leverage are needed if peace and security are to become realities for the Sudanese people. A session in the conference will engage participants in the practical aspects of doing advocacy.

Finally, a vital act of renewal and recommitment will be expressed as we celebrate a Choral Eucharist together in the lovely St. James Cathedral on Sunday morning. Please be with us to reflect, learn, and recommit to sharing with our Sudanese friends their journey toward a more peaceful and stable nation.

Faithfully,
Richard

Welcome to the AFRECS Conference -- Some details for conference-goers

Dear Friends of AFRECS,

We are excited that you will be joining us in Chicago for our [seventh annual conference](#). Our conference is held in the newly renovated commons area adjacent to or attached to the beautiful St James Cathedral in downtown Chicago.

Registration will begin at 10 am the morning of October 18th with the opening session beginning at 1:30 pm as Bishop Jeffrey Lee welcomes us. We shall enjoy a community dinner that evening where we shall have some informal time with the four ECS bishops who are joining our conference. We hope that this will be a time of fellowship and interaction.

Meals will include, in addition to the community dinner on Friday, continental breakfasts on Saturday and Sunday mornings as well as lunch on Saturday in the dining area of the Cathedral Commons. We are hoping to arrange an informal dinner on Saturday evening where guests can gather in groups around topics of special interest. We wanted to create some time for those with similar interests to share ideas and experiences.

All of the sessions will be in plenary as we felt that the importance of the topics and the richness of the resources we have available would be of interest to all conferees. However, we are allowing sufficient time for each session to permit questions and active discussion.

We encourage guests to dress comfortably. Please consider this conference as a time for checking in with old friends and making new ones.

Will see you in a few days.

Warm regards,
Richard

There is still time to register and attend the [2013 AFRECS conference](#).

ECS Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul and the Peace and Reconciliation Initiative

John Ashworth reported that Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul of the Episcopal Church of Sudan, in his role as chair of the Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation, would be traveling "soon" with a few others (including Ashworth) to Capetown, South Africa, to [visit](#) the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), which carries out its work in South Africa and around the continent. IJR posted an [interview](#) with the Archbishop on YouTube.

Archbishop Daniel and South African Anglicans

Archbishop Daniel, in South Africa as a guest of the synod of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, gave an [interview](#) to Anglican Communion News Service. The synod committed Southern African Anglicans to working in [partnership](#) with the Episcopal Church of Sudan.

Paying for Prayers?

Bishop Hilary Luete Adeba of Yei Diocese in the Episcopal Church of Sudan is quoted in a [story](#) in *The Niles* deploring the practice of some South Sudanese clergy demanding to be paid for pastoral encounters such as praying for someone. Bishop Moses of Wau Diocese also recently released a statement denouncing this practice, known as "Prosperity Gospel," to reassure friends that nothing of the sort is occurring in his diocese.

Sudan Study Day in Salisbury Diocese

Perhaps most of our readers are not in the UK, but in case you are, consider attending the [annual Sudan Study Day](#) in Salisbury Diocese October 12th. If not, you may like to take a leaf from the Salisbury book and plan your own Sudan Study Day wherever you are.

Ellen's Latest Post from Juba

Be sure to see the Rev. Ellen Hanckel's [Sunday blog post](#) chronicling the first few weeks of her current teaching assignment at Bishop Gwynne College in Juba.

In the two Sudans:

Statements on the Two Sudans

The **African Union Peace and Security Council** met on the margins of the UN General Assembly September 23rd. Their [report](#) includes a decision to extend the work of the Thabo Mbeki-led

High-Level Implementation Panel on Sudan and South Sudan through December 2014 and an admonition to both sides not to move unilaterally on an Abyei referendum but to convene a referendum commission and move forward with the promised vote. The **Sudan-South Sudan Consultative Forum** also met at the UN on September 27th and issued a [communiqué](#).

Dealing with the Border

The Small Arms Survey has reports just out on the progress toward creating a [Safe Demilitarized Border Zone \(SDBZ\)](#) between Sudan and South Sudan, to which the two countries' presidents recommitted in their September meeting, and the [14-Mile Area](#), a key part of the SDBZ. The Satellite Sentinel Project's continuing [surveillance](#) reveals that both countries are violating the SDBZ agreements. Voice of America sums up the latest on the ongoing conflict over carrying out the [Abyei referendum](#), and an Enough Project field consultant has a [report](#) from **Abyei**.

Follow-Up to US Special Envoy Donald Booth's Visit to the Sudans

The telephonic press conference scheduled for September 26th was cancelled because of conflicting events around the UN General Assembly. So far as we know, there has been

In Sudan:

Protests Continue

The protests in Khartoum and other Sudanese cities, sparked by the end of fuel subsidies, have continued. The US Department of State [condemned](#) the Khartoum government's use of force against civilians and arrests of activists, and urged the government to find a way to create a political dialogue. The UN Independent Expert on human rights in Sudan called on the Sudan government to either [charge or release](#) hundred of imprisoned protesters. Various sources over these past several weeks have expressed hopes and doubts regarding the implications of these protests (for example, [The Economist](#), [The New York Times](#), [The Washington Post](#), [The Modern Tokyo Times](#), [Reuters](#)). ThinkProgress published a [helpful Q&A](#) at the end of September that the Enough Project picked up. John Ashworth has collected several recent [summaries](#) of the situation, and Human Rights Watch has also published a [summary](#). The [Sudan Martyrs blog](#) chronicles those who have died in the NCP's violent crackdown on protesters, and the [Sudan Speaks blog](#) provides ongoing specifics about the protests. Martin Plaut has posted an [interview](#) with a protester in hiding. *The Niles* reports that some [media organizations](#) in Sudan have either been suppressed by the government or self-suppressed in frustration. *Al-Arabiyya* provides a long [analysis](#) of the mistakes the Khartoum regime has made in reacting to these protests, and the *Sudan Tribune* reported that a number of members of President Bashir's party, the NCP, sent a [memo criticizing](#) the discontinuation of the subsidies and the government's response to the protests, and likewise reported on the [government's negative reaction](#) to a letter from party members to this effect. As of this morning, the *Sudan Tribune* cites [government sources](#) saying that over 60 people have been killed in the protests, and some 600 arrested. (But last week Amnesty International put the number of [deaths](#) at over 200.)

Blue Nile and South Kordofan

For a look at the situation in Blue Nile from one young man's perspective, check out this [video](#).

Blue Nile and South Kordofan states have both announced that they have plans for [reopening their borders](#) with South Sudan, according to the *Sudan Tribune*.

Coda to the Controversy over Sudan's Attendance at the UNGA Meeting

In the last AFRECS eblast, we reported on the ongoing drama between the US Government, the UN, and the Sudanese Government over whether President Al Bashir would be allowed into the US to attend the meeting of the UN General Assembly. In the end, he did not try to attend, but Foreign Minister Ali Karti came and [addressed the UNGA](#). *The Sudan Tribune* reports that while in New York, Karti and his entourage had their vehicle [stopped and searched](#) thoroughly.

US Secretary of State John Kerry met on the sidelines of the UNGA with Sudan's FM Karti, and the State Department published a daily press briefing that included a [readout](#) of that meeting. They did not discuss the protests and government crackdown against them, but they did discuss President Bashir's visa situation briefly, according to the State Department's spokeswoman.

In South Sudan:

Refugees in Unity State

The Niles reports that some 2000 refugees from the Nuba Mountains are being [relocated](#) by the UN to a camp in Rubkona County, Unity State, which seems to be where, on the other hand, oil extraction threatens to [displace](#) some local communities, also reported by *The Niles*.

Vice President Addresses UN General Assembly

Newly appointed Vice President James Wani Igga of South Sudan [addressed](#) the UN General Assembly on September 26th. He expressed appreciation for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and regret for deaths of UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in his country, and discussed the post-independence issues the country is facing. Like Karti, Igga and his team experienced unexpected attention from American security, in this case, [security measures](#) at JFK airport, despite their diplomatic passports, according to the *Sudan Tribune*.

Accusations Against the South Sudanese Army

The army of South Sudan is accused of atrocities against civilians, particularly in Jonglei State against the Murle people. *The New York Times* has a long [article](#) on the matter.

Jonglei's Troubles

The InterDependent, the online magazine of the UN Association, has published an [article](#) on the background and the current status of the interethnic problems in Jonglei state. And UPI reported that [talks](#) began last week with David Yau Yau, leader of a rebel militia group involved in the intertribal conflict.

Illness Alerts

Three cases of [polio](#) have been reported in Eastern Equatoria and Northern Bahr Al Ghazal states, sparking a massive polio vaccination campaign. And there is a [measles](#) outbreak in Upper Nile state.

Fashion and Culture

On a lighter note, the *New York Times* has an article on [culture, taste](#), and identity in South Sudan, with a focus on a recent fashion show.

PRAY: Please pray for Archbishop Daniel as he carries out his dual but complementary roles in the church and civil society. Pray for a good harvest as the rainy season comes to an end, and especially for those in Sudan and South Sudan who were unable to plant or lost their crops because of floods or instability. Pray for those responsible for negotiating and enforcing border and referendum decisions, that justice and peace may prevail.

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