

AFRECS E-Blast: February 7, 2012

PRAY. TEACH. PARTNER. URGE. GIVE.

In the church:

STAYING THE COURSE: A Message from AFRECS Executive Director Richard Parkins

Sometimes situations seem so intractable, so complex, and so tumultuous that some may be inclined to surrender to a sense of despair, deciding that there is no intervention within our scope that could make a difference. Such may be the situation in Sudan, both north and south, as we witness horrific violence between tribes in South Sudan and the ongoing relentless bombing of innocent Sudanese in the north. While continuing our prayers and advocacy for peace, there is also more that we can do. Our inability to reverse the violence that besets Sudan may frustrate us, but as people of hope with an enduring belief in God's presence in the midst of suffering, we can act.

The good news is that many are supporting the much-needed education that bypassed many Sudanese during the half century of civil conflict. Others are finding ways to bring health care to those whose lives would be ones of suffering and short duration were it not for these interventions. Others are sustaining partnerships with faithful Sudanese Christians who value the witness and friendship that these companion connections represent. Others foster peace-building initiatives that bring tribal enemies together. Some seek ways of bridging the gap of misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians who want to live peacefully together. Educating pastors to more effectively serve their people is a goal that engages others. Projects serving children and women whose needs were neglected during the protracted civil strife that uprooted so many model new forms of recovery and self-sufficiency. These are often stories that do not get wide dissemination, but they are stories of hope and reconciliation that need to be encouraged and supported as we are bombarded with deeply disturbing news. These stories also offer vehicles of compassion and caring for those of us who are committed to peace and justice for our Sudanese sisters and brothers. We are still called to make an investment in work that promotes the reconciling presence of Christ in places where misery and suffering seems to abound.

In reflecting upon the ministry of Christ, we are reminded of the compassion that he expressed with each encounter with sorrow and tragedy. Christ's journey was in a country and at a time when suffering was prevalent and hope was lacking. The fact that he did not end all misfortune nor heal all did not invalidate his ministry. Those who were healed bore witness to the hope that he conveyed and the promise of new life that his presence in their midst offered. We as disciples can continue to be bearers of hope and new life even as the presence of war and violence so often seem overwhelming. There is another story to be told.

Bishop Gwynne Theological College

The Rev. Dr. Ellen Hanckel is in Juba to teach for four months at Bishop Gwynne Theological College. She is prepared to teach Paul's letter to the Romans, the Reformation, and an introduction to sociology. Ellen is volunteering through Mission Personnel at the Episcopal Church Center, where raising money to fund the expenses of one's assignment is required of the volunteer. Any wishing to contribute to support Ellen's ministry may do so by sending contributions to [AFRECS](#).

The Rev. Trevor Stubbs, formerly interim administrator and now international consultant to Bishop Gwynne Theological College in Juba, has sent out a [letter](#) asking for grants and charitable donations to the college. The letter describes the very basic accommodations in the college and the diligence of the students, and lays out the needs for which Trevor is seeking funding. To support the college and its students from around Sudan and South Sudan, see the [letter](#).

CAPA Meeting

The Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa is currently meeting in Burundi. Although broader than our focus on the ECS, its first-day [report](#) is generally relevant, and Sudan and South Sudan are mentioned specifically. CAPA adjourned today and will release its reports and statements soon.

In politics -- Sudan:

Bible School Bombed

Sudan has [bombed](#) a Samaritan's Purse-built Bible school in the Nuba Mountains; UN Ambassador Susan Rice [reacted](#).

War and the Prospect of War

As the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) [continue](#) to fight rebels, especially the SPLM-North, in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, President **Omar al-Bashir** of Sudan this week remarked that his country is **closer to war than peace** with South Sudan; President **Salva Kiir** of South Sudan on Monday leveled a [barrage](#) of charges and criticism against Bashir. The 29 **Chinese workers** captured by the SPLM-N in South Kordofan were [released](#) today. Congressman **Frank Wolf** of Virginia sent a [letter](#) to President Obama about Sudan this week, and Sudanese Foreign Minister **Ali Karti** [warned the US](#) against trying to send aid into Sudan's war zones and made scathing remarks about the influence of activists on the American government. Meanwhile, **US activists** continue to carry out their lobbying, with a group of well-known community-based organizations sending a [letter](#) to US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice about the humanitarian crisis and need for humanitarian aid in southern Sudan.

Latest update: Radio Dabanga has announced (in a release dated February 8th) that President Salva Kiir of South Sudan is [deploying troops](#) along the border with Sudan, saying at a Juba army base that recent remarks of Sudanese President Al-Bashir amount to a declaration of war.

Revolution

Al-Jazeera English [interviewed](#) an activist spokesperson about the possible arrival of 'the Arab Spring' in Sudan.

OFAC Sanctions

The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control has [updated](#) its sanctions against Sudan with some added and some deleted individuals and entities.

Sectarian Strife

Sunni and Sufi Muslims [clashed](#) at a celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday in Omdurman.

In politics -- South Sudan:

International Involvement

Reliefweb has a [briefing kit](#) on South Sudan that includes recent statements from organizations such as the African Union.

Tribal Conflict in Jonglei Continues

The Lou Nuer and allies announced their [plan](#) for **Operation Savannah Storm** this week, which involves some 30,000 [troops](#) surrounding the Murle people to "quarantine" them. Watch or read a [report](#) from Press TV in Juba on the situation in Jonglei. In the US, the Jonglei Peace Initiative. a group from all the tribes involved in the Jonglei conflict, met in DC and issued a detailed [statement](#) about the situation, calling for peaceful resolution.

Shooting at a Peace Conference

Unity State hosted a peace conference with Warrap and Lakes States to try to resolve disputes among their peoples, but at least 37 people died in a [shootout](#) at the conference.

Oil Crisis

Voice of America cites Jimmy Mulla of Voices for Sudan in its [summary](#) of the current state of the South Sudan oil crisis. Salva Kiir says there will be [no resolution](#) of the oil crisis without agreements on other major issues such as Abyei. [Global oil traders](#) are watching the crisis

nervously, and a Danish research institute offers [analysis](#) of the challenges to building a new pipeline through Kenya.

The LRA

The US Department of State has updated its [fact sheet](#) on the situation with the Lord's Resistance Army.

Child Soldiers Released

53 child soldiers were separated from armed groups in Western Bahr al-Ghazal State last week, and the government of the Republic of South Sudan [promised](#) that 1500 would be released.

Development

The issue of land ownership and development is widely regarded as complex and contentious. *The Guardian* [takes on](#) the topic.

Public Panel on Sudan and South Sudan

Emory University in Atlanta will host a [panel discussion](#) -- free and open to the public -- by well-known Sudan experts on the conflict in Sudan on February 15th.

PRAY: Please pray for the representatives of the Anglican Provinces in Africa meeting in Burundi, for their work and for their safe travels as they return to their homes. Pray for all those in harm's way in Sudan and South Sudan and for the just and peaceful resolution of the many conflicts in and between these two nations.

URGE: Please consider [contacting](#) the unelected administration officials who shape US Sudan/South Sudan policy with your thoughts, as the [Sudan Advocacy Action Forum](#) has asked us to do.

GIVE: To support theological education in the Episcopal Church of Sudan, please help fund the Rev. Dr. Ellen Hanckel's time [teaching](#) at Bishop Gwynne College and/or the [college generally](#).

This 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. To join the list if you received this email as a forward, please send an email to AFRECS_E-Blasts@afrecs.org with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. If you wish to unsubscribe, please send an email to AFRECS_E-Blasts@afrecs.org with "UNSUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. For more information about AFRECS, visit our website www.afrecs.org or our Facebook page.