

AFRECS E-Blast: April 22, 2015

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The Resurrection Response
A Message from AFRECS Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we consider the various messages encountered in the Scripture passages read during this Easter season, one that strikes me as worthy of further reflection is the description of the disciples when the reality of Jesus's resurrection finally takes hold. After the skeptical Thomas was finally convinced, the rest of the disciples were ready to receive the command of Jesus that they continue the mission and ministry that he had initiated and to which they had previously committed. It appears that their faith needed to be revived as they responded fearfully to the crucifixion of their master. Their faith was renewed, and they went forth as more courageous and bolder ambassadors of His message of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation. But in going forward, they encountered resistance and threats, some of which resulted in their martyrdom. What the resurrection did was to embolden a group of frightened and probably weary souls to vigorously proclaim the Gospel against amazingly formidable odds. As their belief in Christ was restored and deepened, so was their their ability to enter into vigorous discipleship. Is there a lesson in this post resurrection story for us as Christian advocates of a peaceful and stable South Sudan?

After nearly 18 months of relentless conflict and multiple failures by the key adversaries to realize that their intransigence is contributing to the suffering of thousands, we as Christian friends may be prone to despair and a sense of futility about what we might do. Yes, we are required to remain hopeful; but being hopeful is not enough. We must move a step forward to acts of faith that allow the seemingly impossible to become agents of change.

We recently learned that the entire faith community of South Sudan has made its presence felt in Addis in an attempt to move the stymied peace process forward and to convey their indignation that selfish and arrogant leadership is holding a nation hostage to unmitigated suffering. This is an act of faith by religious leaders bolstered by a belief that their message is informed by the Gospel and sustained by God's presence. If belief begets action, then action has a chance of bringing about change because it is fortified by belief.

There are acts of faith being carried out in many arenas in South Sudan. Peace and reconciliation efforts go forward. Just two days ago, I received a call from Bishop Abraham Yel telling me with a note of excitement about the peace work being carried out among competing tribes in the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. Bishop Moses Deng of Wau has forwarded proposals seeking support for a number of projects that would advance the well being of his people and the church which embraces them. Bishop Andudu of the diocese of

Kadugli continues to confront the suffering of his people in the Nuba mountains by equipping his pastors to be a source of spiritual support in a part of the world that has experienced decades of unspeakable anguish. Mother Harriet of the Mothers' Union leads women as bold spokespersons for peace and reconciliation, and our friends at SUDRA are creative and courageous as they bring relief and humanitarian assistance to devastated and hard to reach conflict areas of South Sudan. Amazing work is being done to educate young persons in various parts of South Sudan - programs which express consummate acts of faith in the future of a nation that many would write off as a failed state. As elusive as peace may seem to many, there are those with faith whose belief in resurrection and God's sustaining presence is challenging the evil that this horrible conflict represents.

In carrying forward Christ's work, the disciples did not enter a society where their message was readily received nor easily disseminated. They were, however, undeterred in spreading the message. Success was not instant, but as members of the body of Christ, we know that their work bore fruit. We should expect no less from the work that so many are doing in sending resurrection messages to the suffering people of Sudan and South Sudan. Let our own deeds and prayers embrace them.

Faithfully,
Richard Parkins

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South Sudan

On Monday 4/20/15 the [PBS NewsHour](#) featured South Sudan in the segment "UN Struggles to combat hunger in the world's worst combat zones." Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, spoke of the extreme situation created by the conflict in Malakal and Upper Nile State. Director Cousin, recently returned from a trip to South Sudan, said she met one woman who walked for days, able to find only water lilies to feed her children until she could reach a safe food distribution center along the upper Nile. The Director also talked about the School Feeding Program and the hope that it will provide the younger generation an option to avoid the violence that previous generations have experienced.

[The World Council of Churches and the South Sudan Council of Churches convened church leaders for a special consultation on the South Sudan Peace Process.](#)

Recently in Addis Ababa, 20 church leaders and representatives from South Sudan and Ethiopia met along with related agencies for two days to reflect on the tragic situation of conflict in South Sudan, now in its sixteenth month, the recent collapse of peace talks among the parties to the conflict, and fresh ways forward.

On April 14th, the [UN Refugee Agency \(UNHCR\)](#) issued a report that confirms "the conflict has had a catastrophic impact on the civilian population..." Refugees continue to cross borders into neighboring countries and are being advised not to return to South Sudan until the situation improves.

Aljazeera America recently aired an interview with Alex de Waal. The [Fault Lines](#) Digital Team investigated the story: "South Sudan: Country of Dreams." Read the full story at the above link. A brief excerpt follows:

"Alex de Waal, an expert on Sudan, is the executive director of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts University. He says that, in their intervention in Sudan, the U.S. and its international allies chose to empower the SPLA to separate from the Islamist government in Khartoum and lead a new nation in the south. Human rights abuses and corruption were ignored and the development of a healthy civil society in South Sudan neglected, setting the stage for the humanitarian disaster now unfolding there."

Both Sudan and South Sudan

Also by Alex de Waal is a book review entitled "Bona Malwal's Truths" posted in [African Arguments](#). Again, a brief excerpt follows:

"Bona Malwal's political memoir is a complete resemblance of the man himself: argumentative and plain-spoken, partisan and selective, infuriating, fascinating, disorganized and wide-ranging, eloquent, essential and completely unique. Every South Sudanese and Sudanese should read it, all of it. Like Bona himself, his book, *Sudan and South Sudan: From One to Two*, has to be taken whole."

Sudan

On April 19th [BloombergBusiness](#) reported that Sudan's voter turnout reached 40%. "President Umar al-Bashir, who has ruled for a quarter century, is widely expected to win. The main opposition parties didn't field candidates. Results will be announced on April 27."

[Reuter's](#) reports that Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir at the last minute canceled a trip to Indonesia for a summit this week, a government official said, in what would have been his first trip outside of Africa or the Middle East in nearly four years. Bashir's plan to attend the Asia-African leaders conference in Jakarta sparked protests among rights groups, who want the president to be arrested. The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant in 2009 accusing him of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the conflict in Darfur. Indonesia is not an ICC member.

"Because he is busy monitoring the post-elections operations, the country's leadership saw it best for President Omar al-Bashir to stay in the country," said Sudan's foreign ministry spokesman Ali al-Sadiq.

The [Sudan Tribune](#) reports that independent candidates have won several constituencies in Sudan's general elections which produced sweeping victory for the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).

[Radio Dabanga](#) reports that "Sudan Security Continues its Press Curbs." The Sudanese Journalists Association for Human Rights (JAHR) denounced the continued curbing of the press freedoms by the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS). AllAfrica carried this story on April 19th.

Thank you to our readers for your interest, your prayers, and your support.

We invite you to visit our [Website: http://www.afrecs.org/](http://www.afrecs.org/)

Ellen J. Hanckel

Editor

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If you'd like to be doing more to help address the crisis in South Sudan, **please consider the following:**

***Pray for peace and deep healing** of the conflicts and rivalries in South Sudan.

***Join AFRECS** or renew your annual membership on line at <http://www.afreecs.org/getInvolved.htm>

* 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@afreecs.org.

* Be prepared to **advocate** for peacemaking with the US (or other) government, especially if attention to conflict resolution wanes.

* [Donate](#) to support the Episcopal Church in South Sudan and Sudan's efforts to provide solace and encourage reconciliation.

***Urge others** to support [AFRECS](#) as well.
