

***The Episcopal Church of the Sudan
House of Bishops***



**Pastoral Letter Advising the Sons and Daughters of the
Republic of South Sudan**

Saturday 9 July 2011

The Episcopal Church of the Sudan Independence Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We give you all the honour and the praise as we celebrate the wonderful independence you have given us.

You have led your children across the river, bringing an end to our slavery and abuse.

We have left behind the pain and suffering of so many years of oppression.

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. May those who surrendered their lives for the freedom we now enjoy, rest in perfect and everlasting peace in your kingdom.

Let your Holy Spirit guide and protect us as we strive for the peace, freedom and stability we have longed for in this land.

Show us how to love one another as you have so commanded us to do

Unite us to each other and to yourself.

Cancel any plans of tribalism, corruption, injustice, division and greed that may linger in the hearts of your children causing us to live in darkness and confusion.

And grant us your grace and blessings in abundance as we build this new nation of South Sudan for your glory in accordance with your holy will.

We ask this in the name of your Son, our Saviour and Friend, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Caring for God's Gift of Independence

A call for practical action

Preamble

The House of Bishops, comprising the 31 dioceses of the Province of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan, under the leadership of the Most Rev Dr Daniel Deng Bul Yak, have issued the following joint pastoral letter to the children of South Sudan to be a guide and framework for them as citizens of the new Republic of South Sudan.

i. The challenging context for independence

Achieving a successful referendum

We congratulate the Government of South Sudan which has brought the Referendum to the people of South Sudan, the result of which has brought the independence of our country. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement framework made possible an extended period of peace which enabled the establishment of the institutions of government: army, police, legislature and executive in South Sudan. We now have a real government and can now be identified as a nation, which has attracted international support. These are great achievements which must be recognized, celebrated and guarded carefully.

The challenge of securing peace and stability

The Episcopal Church of Sudan understands that the Government of South Sudan now faces numerous challenges in securing the sustained peace, stability, growth and development which should be the fruits of Independence on July 9th. These include the unresolved issues which have followed the peaceful referendum, notably Abyei, the North-South border and the mounting insecurity caused by militia activities in different parts of the new country as well as Lords Resistance Army activities in the west. We are especially concerned about the escalation of hostilities around Abyei.

ECS recognizes that resolving these internal and external causes of insecurity must be a priority for the Government as it seeks to sustain the absence of conflict, which was made possible by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Political solutions will be easier to identify and implement if there is an absence of conflict. A renewal of war between the two countries of South Sudan and North Sudan will bring untold suffering to our people and delay the point at which we can begin to heal the trauma of the war years, and recover the lost decades of development.

We stand willing to play our part in sharing the burden of responsibility which rests on the shoulders of the Government of South Sudan. We are mobilizing our own international networks to encourage the international donor community to give the

same attention to this critical period in the history of South Sudan as they gave in the period leading up to the Referendum. An ecumenical international advocacy visit is scheduled for October this year similar to that launched in advance of the referendum.

At home, in our churches and communities across the country, we will continue to preach an holistic gospel to meet the spiritual and physical needs of our people, promoting the values of peace and reconciliation, and the behaviours of non-violence and negotiation. The prayer at the head of this paper will inspire and inform the messages which we promote.

The Transitional Constitution

The Transitional Constitution process is almost complete. While we had argued for a more inclusive process in the development of the Constitution, we remain committed to help the promotion of principles of the Transitional Constitution Document which establish a responsible covenant between those charged with the responsibility of governance and the governed.

We welcome the statement that all religions shall be treated equally and religion or religious beliefs shall not be used for divisive purposes. We also welcome the rights afforded to religious institutions and individuals enshrined in the document.

We will take time to study the finally approved document in depth and, with our fellow religious institutions, engage constructively with the Government in clarifying the provisions included which relate to the roles, rights and responsibilities of religious organisations and their leaders. This includes discussion of the representation of faith-based organizations on the National Constitutional Conference.

We trust that we can also secure other regular meeting points between the leadership of religious institutions and the Government as there is much that our people can gain from effective collaboration between the Government and the representatives of the faith communities.

ii. Three priorities for action

At the same time as encouraging and supporting the Government of South Sudan to take critical steps to control insecurity and resolve pending issues, we call attention to three key opportunities which we believe must be seized firmly in order to build a new and healthy nation for the Republic of South Sudan. In so doing, we recognise the achievements of the Government to date and identify urgent, practical steps for the coming 12 months. We offer this in a spirit of complementary partnership with the Government, other faith communities and their institutions and with the people of South Sudan.

It is our conviction that progress in these three areas will contribute significantly to reduce the vulnerability of our new country to unwelcome and unhelpful interference from outside.

THREE PRIORITY AREAS

1. Achieving Peace and Non-Violence
2. Promoting Unity by reducing tribalism
3. Promoting equitable development through effective decentralisation.

1. Achieving Peace and Non-Violence by Promoting the Rule of Law (customary and modern)

The peace that followed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was achieved through prolonged violence. The violence of the war, leading to the deaths and displacement of millions of our people, has been the price paid for independence. The legacy of this is high levels of trauma across the people of the new country, including those who are choosing to return. We would like to see peace prevail all over the two new sovereign nations. For those who have taken up arms, we call on them to return home and join in the building of the newborn nation. We do not wish for our people to go through further suffering; we have suffered enough.

What has been achieved to date?

- We give credit to the Government for successfully maintaining peace until the Referendum. We also welcome the commitment of the Transitional Constitution to create ‘an all-embracing homeland for its people’, where ‘diversities peacefully co-exist’. This is a powerful vision to inspire our people.

- The Government has managed to keep the tribes together in the lead up to the Referendum through the South-South Dialogue process. Without this, there would not have been such a large majority in favour of independence.
- The Government has also passed a number of important laws which will, over time, shape the development of South Sudan's security organs, especially the police and judiciary, as well as guiding citizens in respect to their responsibilities to uphold the peace, respect human security and property and move away from a culture of impunity.

What is being asked of the Government?

- To work harder to ensure that all citizens understand the new laws of the Republic of South Sudan and how these relate to customary laws.
- To minimise the increasing land disputes and quarrels by undertaking objective surveys of new areas and through mechanisms by which land is equitably distributed.
- To strengthen the judiciary, in order that the laws – modern and customary – are properly executed across the land.
- To work towards greater discipline and cooperation in the armed forces and the police service through correct government and adherence to the constitution in order to minimise instability in South Sudan caused by factionalism and/or personal grievances.
- To renew efforts to address the internal instability caused by the Lords Resistance Army by developing an action plan together with the religious leaders of LRA-affected areas and sustaining dialogue with the UPDF and international community.

What is the Church offering?

- Its strong internal and external network of organizations and people working towards greater justice, peace and reconciliation in South Sudan, in collaboration with other churches through the Sudan Council of Churches interchurch committees, to play an active role in helping to promote among the people the new laws of the land.
- Skilled leaders to assist in mediation processes, which may contribute to political solutions in the armed conflicts currently breaking between militias in South Sudan.
- The Church will do more to promote non-violence and peace at community level through its pastoral role in trauma counselling, local level mediation and the promotion of the Ten Commandments to discourage factionalism and the formation of civil mercenary groups.

2. Achieving unity by promoting the Transitional Constitution and reducing tribalism, nepotism and corruption

We call on our people to be united. The unity that was shown during the referendum should continue to be seen all over the Republic of South Sudan. This is one way of proving wrong those who prophesy that South Sudan is likely to be a failed state. Unity is more likely to be achieved if people understand and respect the new Transitional Constitution whose purpose is to provide a common vision for the development of our new country.

Corruption and nepotism give birth to tribalism. Corruption is more than bribery or embezzlement of funds; it includes abuse of power or authority for private gain. The appointment of people to positions based on family or clan or other ties is also corruption. These trends work against unity and undermine the tenets of the Constitution. We believe that appointments to all positions should be based on merit. Similarly, the misuse or theft of public or church money is also corruption. Fraud, that is the illegal acquisition of money, goods or services, is also considered as corruption. We call on Sudanese people to reject tribalism, nepotism and corruption.

What has been achieved to date?

- We welcome the Transitional Constitution with its clear vision for the new country, as well as the strong stance taken against tribalism, nepotism and corruption in the Constitution.
- We welcome the setting up of the Anti-Corruption Commission and those parts of the Transitional Constitution which make clear the Government's commitments to public accountability and transparency.

What is being asked of the Government?

- To ensure that there is comprehensive consultation about the implementation of the Transitional Constitution. This could be included in the continuation and expansion of the South-South Dialogue process which was so effective before the referendum.
- To ensure that the Transitional Constitution is translated into policies and laws and institutions which can achieve the vision articulated in the Constitution. We believe that this is more likely to happen if due consideration is given to the perspectives of different communities and sectors in the drafting of these laws.
- In view of the pressing concerns about nepotism, to establish a Board of Selection and Appointment charged with the recruitment of all government positions in South Sudan, based on merit and work ethic.
- To improve the training of the South Sudan Police Service so that they know their jobs and become a friend to citizens.

- To orient the Chiefs so that they understand the modern system (for example, by seeing courts in action) and can help to apply the right blend of modern and customary laws.

What is the Church offering?

- We will study carefully the Transitional Constitution document and engage constructively with the Government on the best way of implementing its provisions. We will use our Justice, Peace and Reconciliation capacities to ensure that our communities have also understood their rights and responsibilities under this important founding document.
- The Church will remain united across the two sovereign countries during this transition period to offer solidarity with all the people of the old country and to assist the separation process. This includes our membership to the Sudan Council of Churches, which will also remain one entity in this transition period, modelling ecumenical collaboration from the national to the local level.
- We recognize that nepotism and corruption may exist in our own structures. We are challenging this from the top and have taken steps to reduce transactions in cash, as well as bring in external oversight. We plan to take this accountability down to the dioceses and parishes over the next period.

3. Promoting equitable development through effective decentralisation

We need to fight against poverty, ignorance and disease. We will work with the Government in the provision of services that contribute to fighting and eradicating the above vices. We exhort the Government to set up an economic system that is based on equity which means a fair system that provides equal opportunity for all and protects the poor from being manipulated or exploited by the rich. Enabling the full, equitable and integral development of all our people will be the final proof of value of independence.

What has been achieved to date?

- The Government has brought roads, growing urban development and infrastructure over the last five years.
- The maintenance of peace has enabled commerce to thrive, especially in urban areas.
- A National Development Plan has been developed in recent weeks and this has been achieved through a genuinely consultative process. This lays strong foundations on

which to build collaboration between Government, Public and Private Sector and Civil Society.

- Decentralisation has been established as the model of political and economic development in South Sudan, which should ensure equitable development across the country.

What is being asked of the Government?

- To strengthen the existing systems of service delivery and expand them to reach more remote areas of the country.
- To ensure that in the decentralization of power and authority, the States also remain accountable to the citizens and to the National Parliament.

What is the Church offering?

- We will align our development efforts with the Government's National Development Plan, contributing towards the delivery of basic services where we have most to offer.
- Our structure of dioceses lends itself to the decentralization model of development; each diocese will be able to support development activities at State level as well as remain part of a national structure.
- In most of our dioceses, the Church has clinics and schools with which to support access to education and health during this period where Government services are still in their infancy. We plan to expand these services, working hand-in-hand with Government services providers.
- We are planning to intensify cultivation across the Church so as to increase food security for communities and make the most of precious land resources.

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Realising a greater sense of peace, unity and development has been the core message of this letter. Its advice has largely been directed to the Government of South Sudan, the elected officials whose mandate is to represent the people of South Sudan and operate within the letter and the spirit of the transitional constitution. However, it would be an error to conclude that the transformation of our nation from weakness to strength, from poor to rich, and from volatile to stable is the sole responsibility of the Government. In the Holy Bible, 1 Corinthians 12-27 teaches us the importance of different members of the body working with one another. 'There are many parts yet one body'; we must realize that the members must have the same regard for one another because, 'if one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honoured, all honour together.'

St Paul clearly states that we have been commissioned to work in unison, using our diversity and the various talents we each have, to help ourselves and one another. We must look at our differences from a new perspective, not continue to believe that it is because we are different that we are divided. These differences that we assume are dividing us are actually the key to our development and pivotal to harmonious coexistence. We are all responsible for ensuring that the new Republic of South Sudan is built on a strong foundation. Therefore, let us begin working together from this point onwards to ensure that we can achieve peace and non-violence, reduce tribalism and its devastating effects on our communities, and promote equality of opportunities, human rights and access to justice. If we strive in earnest to adhere to the principle of the Body of Christ, no one and no thing can hold back or hinder the people of the Republic of South Sudan again. **Amen**

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