



Despite the civil war, South Sudanese church leaders find ways to train leaders

“Rev. Paul Rout is a Presbyterian Church of South Sudan pastor serving as the head pastor of the Nuer congregation located in the Jebel district of Juba, South Sudan. His story is important because it represents both the fact that his story is not unlike many of the pastors and church leaders serving in South Sudan and it demonstrates the value of having the opportunity to study at various levels and its impact on ministry in South Sudan. Rev. Paul is a graduate of Giffen Institute of Theology and while he serves his congregation in Juba, is currently in third year studies in the Theological Bachelor Degree program offered by Nile Theological College in Juba. Rev. Paul has a distinguished service record of 36 years in the PCOSS. His presentation of the historical record of Christian ministry among the Nuer people at the 100-year celebration was exemplary and his congregation in Juba is one that thrives even in the midst of war and strife. He communicates a sincere appreciation for the way in which the PC(USA) congregations have accompanied the church in South Sudan for over 100 years mostly a time defined by the violence of conflict and war. His life and service is a testimony to the importance of partnership and the value of relationship to which Presbyterians in the USA and South Sudan are faithfully committed.”

-Michael Weller, PC(USA) mission co-worker serving as the regional liaison for the Horn of Africa.

Since December 2013, the newest country in the world, South Sudan has been involved in a civil war that has ravaged the country and sent people fleeing to Internal Displacement Camps (IDPs) and Refugee Camps in Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, and Kenya. Church leaders and members of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church along with all of their neighbors are dispersed throughout the region and therefore ministry is carried out in a variety of situations, none of which are comfortable. Worship and ministries of compassion, trauma healing, reconciliation, and conflict management are the order of the day. To this end South Sudan Presbyterians have maintained the opportunity for theological study in amazing ways.

The TEE Program in South Sudan continues to provide participants in Juba and Yei an opportunity to learn about the Bible and theology at an introductory level in local languages. Rev. Antipas, the director

of the program reports that there is an added aspect to this training that involves dealing with the trauma that participants have experienced in the current conflict. They come with a desire to learn, but the trauma is an impediment, therefore his group leaders find it necessary and important to minister first to the participants through trauma healing workshops that provide tools to deal with the tragic events that have impacted their lives. Contributions to the TEE program will assist in the cost of translating instruction materials into local languages such as Murle, Dinka, Nuer, Bahri, Anyuwa, and Juba Arabic. Funding will subsidize the cost of training for women and youth in particular.

Giffen Institute of Theology was completely dislocated from Malakal, South Sudan because of the current conflict. Even so, Rev. Gideon Tai, the institute's director, has been able to re-establish the Diploma level program inside the Kakuma Refugee camp in Kenya. In a difficult situation Rev. Gideon writes:

"We have remained with 30 students, that is, 7 of them are women. We completed two semesters with difficulties because we do not have good library for students to learn. They depend on the notes given by the teachers. Through difficult beginning, we thought it would be better for me and others to equip church leaders instead to wait for peace to come back to South Sudan. I believe lacking school materials could not hinder the word of God to be taught. God will provide while we begin the task His people entrusted us to do."

Nile Theological College (Juba) is an institution in South Sudan that has moved from Malakal to Juba because of the conflict. They offer Theological training at the Bachelor degree level and courses are taught in English. Currently they have 18 students from several denominations. The dedicated staff live in difficult situations, but are committed to providing a quality education for their students in an effort to equip pastors for ministry that utilizes the Gospel of Jesus Christ in ministries that compassionately engage the trauma, provide opportunities for healing, and provide spiritual guidance in a time of disorientation. Contributions assist students with the cost of the program and support staff. The Principal, Rev. Santino is hoping to locate property for a future campus in or near Juba. The fact that the school continues is a miracle.

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