

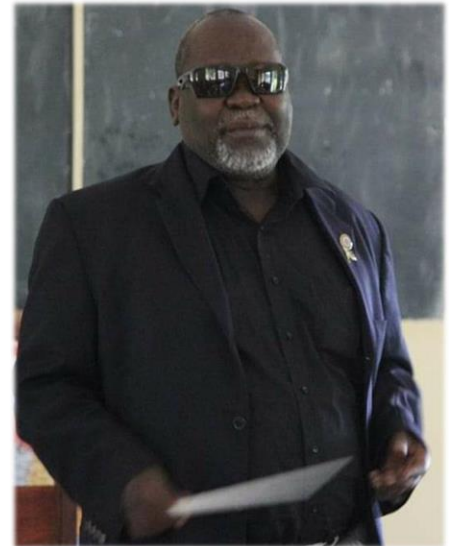


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I. Brief Context Update:

“There was a misunderstanding between the two leaders,” explained Rev. Peter Tibi, Executive Director of RECONCILE International. “Salva Kiir was the deputy to John Garang,” he continued. “They had political differences, and people had taken sides within the split, some supporting Salva Kiir and some Garang...”



Hon. Canon Clement Janda teaching the Conflict Analysis course at the RECONCILE Peace Institute (RPI)

From 1930 to 1956, a joint British and Egyptian government ruled over Sudan. They ruled the northern and southern parts with separate administrations. When the colonial powers planned their exit, they decided that the two regions would become one nation, led by a government in the northern city of Khartoum. The consequent disenfranchisement of the south sparked Africa’s longest civil war.

The civil war played out in two phases. During the second, twenty-two year phase, Colonel John Garang, headed the SPLA’s efforts against the Khartoum-based Sudanese army. Salva Kiir was a top SPLA deputy, so their differences posed a potential divide in the SPLA. “The fear was that it would have crashed the [Sudan People’s Liberation] movement,” stated Tibi.

Rev. Tibi spoke of the tension between the two prominent leaders as part of a larger narrative reflecting on the life of another influential person, Honorable Canon Clement Janda. “In the movement, [Canon Clement Janda] and I made the reconciliation with Salva Kiir and John Garang. We came in as the religious community, me and him. I was Deputy General Secretary of the New Sudan Council of Churches; he was AACC [All Africa Conference of Churches] General Secretary.”

Once the leaders reconciled, the movement’s efforts finally brought Sudan to the negotiating table. The signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement followed. Next, John Garang became the first president of the semi-autonomous south. After Garang’s death, Salva Kiir became the second.

Though Rev Tibi recounted a critical, faith-based intervention that changed the course of history, Rev. Tibi just mentioned it briefly in a longer description of Canon Janda’s impact on the country, on RECONCILE and on him personally. “[Canon Janda] played a great role not only in church circles but also in political circles,” Tibi went on. “In the conflict with the Cobra Faction [led by] David Yau Yau against the Government, the Government

asked him to mediate, until the peace was achieved, which was successful.” This 2014 peace agreement ended a four-year rebellion of an armed force opposed to the government of South Sudan. Even while engaged in the transformative tasks of negotiating peace and helping shape the constitution of his young country, Canon Janda committed to teaching at the RECONCILE Peace Institute (RPI). Annually, he instructed the first, two-week course of the 3-month curriculum. His focus: conflict analysis.

“He gives the context of South Sudan and Sudan, and the cultural background, so other teachers can build on that. Because he is a South Sudanese, he understands the context and has knowledge of the wars and of the church,” Tibi explained.

For the first course of RPI to be effective, though, it must offer more than just a comprehensive account of the history, cultures, root causes of conflict and current situation in the nation. The institute brings together grassroots leaders of various ethnic groups. Some of the ethnic groups have, for decades, wounded each other in cycles of violence.

Canon Janda consistently accomplished the daunting, underlying mission of helping the students feel safe learning together. He entered discussions with an expertise that kept their interest and a humility that earned their trust. Janda helped the participants “to live peacefully with each other in the compound, despite being from different backgrounds,” Tibi explained.

He also helped PCUSA Mission Co-Worker and RPI’s Principal, Rev Shelvis Smith-Mather expand the reach of RPI. “From the beginning, Canon Janda was a mentor for me: guiding, affirming, informing, and helping me imagine how RPI could stretch her efforts to every state across the nation and to neighboring refugee camps across South Sudan’s borders. And we did, with his connections, wisdom and encouragement.”

During the 2016 resurgence of civil war in South Sudan, Canon Janda fled to Arua, Uganda. In the 2018 national peace talks held in Addis Abba, Canon Janda attended as a representative for the millions of South Sudanese refugees. There he publicly lamented the lack of attention given to those suffering in the camps. As their advocate and a refugee himself, he stated “We just want to go home to our homes and be safe to cultivate and to rear our cattle and goats and live in peace. So, we want security.”

Lamentably, Honorable Canon Clement Janda died on March 8, 2021 at the age of eighty. But his legacy of peacebuilding lives on in the efforts of RECONCILE, Rev. Tibi, Rev. Shelvis and the South Sudan Education and Peace Program.

Please pray for Canon Clement Janda’s wife, Joyce Janda, and his children who survived him. Please pray that his legacy of peacebuilding will multiply in the country that he loved.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support for peacebuilding and education development in South Sudan.



Joyce Janda (center), an Oxford University alumni and education expert, welcomes visitors to the Janda’s Ugandan home in May 2019 (Clement Janda far right).



Girls from the Kasire II PCOSS church community gather to embrace their self-worth and support each other.

II. PCOSS Update:

- Efforts to address the division among the PCOSS leadership, which manifested at the 2020 General Assembly, are still ongoing. The contentious situation triggered conflict in a church in Malakal and also one in Juba. (Please prayer for peace, patience, humility and true reconciliation).
- Even with tension at the top level of the church, life-giving ministry still continues within local congregations. A great example is the PCOSS congregation and school in Kasire II near Juba. They have continued their commitment to empowering young girls, bringing them together for regular meetings. Initially, they hoped 100 girls would attend each gathering, and that they would find it a safe space to discuss issues important to them (with no topic off-limits). In the latest meetings, 200 girls participated!!!

They sought to develop a “sisterhood of acceptance,” accepting themselves and others. They are learning to advocate for change and to address the social and cultural norms (early marriage, devaluation of a girl's worth, isolation during menstrual cycle, gender-based violence, etc.) that prevent girls from reaching their full potential. They are gaining skills as peer counselors and also learning the importance of serving as role models in the community.



PCOSS girls excited to receive dignity/hygiene kits from PC(USA) friends

Some of the girls started monthly prayer groups in the church to encourage each other with the Word of God and to pray for peace. In their most recent 2-day gathering, they received dignity/hygiene kits from the PC(USA) and face masks from the local community. (Please pray for the girls' gatherings, confidence, opportunities and influence to grow).

III. Across Update

This quarter, the staff of Across envisioned implementing Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs in two rural, hard-to-reach communities: Pibor and Pochalla.

"[Currently] access to ECD in the two locations is minimal... Many of the children who are going to primary school are overage because they have not been prepared at ECD level... Given the fragility of these locations, the children are at a higher risk. It would be good to support the children and lay the foundation for a brighter future," explained Across' project specialist, Andrew Olal.



"It would be good to support the children and lay the foundation for a brighter future." -Andrew Olal, Across

Across' Program Manager, Enoch Ongwara, shared about the decision to locate the ECD programs in the local churches: *"We will be able to help the church be active 7-days a week; Monday to Friday with the ECD, Saturday for community events and Sunday for worship. Then the church becomes the center of the community, the center of what happens... If we could attract personnel from the church, for example, the youth from the church could help teach; then it becomes holistic."*

Ongwara continued, *"If they come through the church, then they have a value system from an early age. Then the church shapes the world-view of the community and the children. It is like when the Israelites were going to the promised land. You have to prepare the younger generation."*

Across' network of relationships often leads to collaboration, multiplying the impact of their work. For the ECD program, they hope to ask the Ministry of Education for learning materials and the World Food Program for food through their "food for education" initiative.

In addition to equipping teachers and children through an effective ECD program, Across also plans to engage parents. *"Parenting is highly required to support education,"* Ongwara stated. Andrew Olal added, *"Parents play a big role in bringing up their children. If this project is to take off, parents need to be supported in the way they rear their children to help them holistically."*

The PC(USA) feels honored to join Across' efforts as they start developing ECD programs. Reflecting on our partnership through the years, Across shared these words, *"Thanks to the family of PC(USA) for the love you have for the people of Pibor and Pochalla and the people who are marginalized... The church and the next generation are the hope for South Sudan."*

IV. RECONCILE Update

- The pandemic still limits RECONCILE’s ability to travel to the refugee camps in Uganda. Consequently, they have decided to implement some SSEPP programs in South Sudan next quarter.
- At present, RECONCILE remains active within South Sudan implementing other activities. For example, RECONCILE is facilitating a reconciliation process between young adults and outside NGOs in Eastern Equatoria. In South Sudan, it is not uncommon for young adults to become frustrated when NGOs open offices in their communities yet do not hire employees locally. In an area called Maban, young adults burned down NGO offices to protest the issue.

In an effort to avoid a similar escalation to violence, RECONCILE was asked to intervene. *“We are meeting with groups separately. We want to hear all from both sides... We need the youth [young adults] to understand the system of employment, that it is based on merit, skills, and education attainment. They have to understand why NGOs have selected their staff, and the NGOs also have to see where they have gone wrong...”* Rev. Tibi explained. (Please pray for mutual understanding and a peaceful way forward).



The Presbyterian Church in Kasire II in Juba continues to encourage girls in their spiritual and educational formation

V. Testimonies of Impact

- The educational endeavor in Kasire II started long before their school was constructed. The process began when a local PCOSS congregation started a Sunday School under the shade of a tree. The same children then meet under the same tree for school during the week. Next, local and traditional leaders decided to give a piece of land for classrooms. The construction of a permanent building through SSEPP support, meant learning could continue even in the rain.

Today, the congregation continues to provide spiritual nourishment to the school-age population as well as occasional care packages to the volunteer teachers. Through the SSEPP and PCOSS partnership, the untrained teachers received training. The head teacher even completed his certificate at an accredited teacher training college!

Previously, the SSEPP helped facilitate a parent training, equipping the strong Parents’ Council that continues leading the school. Research shows that educating parents dramatically increases the educational attainment of children. So, it is very exciting that adult literacy classes have now started at the school!

When church communities, like Kasire II, have opportunities to organize themselves and gain skills in advocacy and networking, they can develop their communities in multi-faceted ways. For example, while the school received basic school supplies from SSEPP funds in the past, it is encouraging to know that the school advocated for text books through the government, and received them! Also, the efforts of this active PCOSS congregation, along with their local community, recently led to the opening of a small clinic. They are determined to make a better future for their children, one step at a time.

- The impact created by Across' presence in Pibor continues to multiply. Pibor is geographically difficult to reach and known for insecurity. Consequently, many partners hesitate to support programs there. Once Across began the mobile teacher training through SSEPP, however, other partners, encouraged by Across' willingness, began supporting development in this marginalized area.

For the mobile teacher training, Across recruited a full-time staff person to live in Pibor. Since Across did not have an office in Pibor, the staff rented a room from a local organization. Enoch Ongwara, Across' Program Manager, recently gave an update on what has happened since that time:

"It was important to have presence in Pibor, and it grew out of the mobile teacher training. We had the mobile teacher training, then UNICEF opened the secondary school which Across managed. Then UNICEF came with a grant for continuous education.

We have reached a point where Across has its own compound with two rub halls [big storage areas]. Any food [assistance] taken to Pibor, is put in the Across compound... We have a compound, a Land Cruiser, a team with support from Help a Child Netherlands, a food security officer, and a manager who supports the work from Juba. Across has purchased motorboats to support programs during the rainy season, to try to access the people. We have support funding from the EU [European Union] for technical/professional training... We have a strong presence. Across is well appreciated by the Pibor Administrative Area."



Across facilitating a training inside their rub hall in Pibor.

(Praise God that these opportunities are reaching the people of Pibor!)

VI. Challenges/Opportunities

- *"The food [ration] has reduced in the camp, and in the camp you don't have anywhere to grow food. [As a result,] I have seen more than 100 motorbikes daily bringing people home [to South Sudan]. They get home, and there is no food. In Yei, no food has been planted because there is no rain. So, there is going to be hunger. There are no mangos growing, no fruits... This has never happened in Yei before, that up until April nothing has been planted, and the price of items has not come down, it is still high! That is the situation. We are expecting hunger."* – Rev. Peter Tibi, Executive Director, RECONCILE
- *"Because of the clashes between NAS [National Salvation Front] and Government, there is displacement. People are coming to Yei. Over a thousand people are living in the church compound."* - Rev. Tibi
- *"With the challenge of COVID, the financial level has reduced, so there is a challenge of paying salaries in full. We are paying almost a quarter of the salary... For us whose families are in Kenya, we have to pay rent, we have to pay high school fees. We decided to hold on for things to improve... We are surviving by grace"* – Rev. Tibi

- **COVID Update:** The lockdown was extended from March 3 to April 3. The rules are enforced strictly in Juba, but not as much in other parts of the country. Large gatherings, like Sunday worship, are prohibited. It is possible to hold a training with a smaller number of people, as long as the participants wear masks, wash hands and social distance. In order to travel outside of South Sudan, an individual must travel to Juba to get a COVID test, and then acquire a certificate, which is valid for 72 hours.
- Schools remained closed during the first quarter of 2021, yet they are scheduled to re-open on May 3.



Thank you for partnering with these efforts!

VII. Financial Update

The PC(USA)'s relationships with our South Sudanese partners is an incredible gift. It encourages us in our faith, it inspires us to persevere through challenges, and it reminds us to work towards new possibilities. The South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Program is one way that our denomination connects with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS), RECONCILE International, Across and also teacher training colleges in South Sudan, and we thank God that it is a connection which bears fruit in both countries.

Thank you for your contributions that allow the PC(USA) to join into our partners' ministries. In the first quarter, \$27,996.25 was given towards these collaborative efforts. Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis remains committed to partially matching each gift.

Thank you for your continued prayers, advocacy and financial support.

VIII. Mission Co-Worker Update:

As required by the PC(USA) General Assembly, all Presbyterian Mission Agency staff are participating in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training. The most recent session looked specifically at the ways ideas about patriarchy, capitalism, imperial Christianity and white supremacy effect American culture and our influence in the world. Digging a bit deeper, the Mission Co-Workers serving on the continent of Africa engaged the topic of colonialism together, examining the "residue" of colonialism that taints our perspectives, attitudes and behaviors, even without our realization. These trainings cause us to do the difficult work of reflection.

In response, Nancy Smith-Mather shared: "The trainings help me to think deeply about my own internal biases and the ways they lead me to devalue others. I am also challenged to continue to think critically about the "story" that I tell when describing the context in East Africa."

On the same topic, Honorable Canon Clement Janda once shared a painful experience linked with Americans visiting Kenya. The travelers drove past the skyscrapers in Nairobi, past the beautiful hotels, malls, and churches. Then, upon reaching a more rural, impoverished area, they rushed to get out their cameras.

He feared the visitors would return to the US, show their photos of small, mud-walled homes, and further the incomplete narrative that, “this is Africa.” His concern is valid. Let us, as the church in the US commit to grappling with it honestly.

“The sentiment behind Canon Janda’s words are not far from my mind when I write about South Sudan. I am aware of the problem created with portraying a singular story, and at the same time, I need to keep that reality continually before me to hold me accountable,”



In May 2019, Canon Janda gave the address at a gathering to send off the Smith-Mather family from Arua to Oxford

Please pray for all the Mission Co-Workers serving in Africa, and around the world, that these trainings may help us to understand the ways aspects of our upbringings and culture negatively impact our interactions with those with whom we seek to live in loving, mutually encouraging relationship. It is not easy to assess ourselves or confess our failures, yet with God, all things are possible.

Grant us humility, oh God, to confess the error of our ways, and renew right spirits within us. Amen



Canon Janda encourages a group comprised of several nations including Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and the US. They gathered at Borderlands Co-Op, a collaboration of Christian organizations participating in ministry in the refugee camps in northern Uganda. RECONCILE International and Across are members. The Co-op reminds us of the good that is possible when we intentionally and humbly work together, honoring one another’s strengths.