

Archiepiscopal Visit to Malakal Diocese 29 March - 2 April 2011



The congregation at the community prayers in Malakal Town pray for the Inter-Church Peace Committee

Introduction

Just a few weeks ago, Malakal Town, capital of Upper Nile State was the scene of fierce fighting in the early hours of the morning of 12th March in which dozens of civilians were killed. Violence in Upper Nile State is not a new or rare occurrence. Every year since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005 there has been fighting between the Joint Integrated Unit and the in However, residents of the town were nevertheless shocked and fearful when the town itself became the battleground for intense conflict. Although it has proven difficult to acquire accurate information on who was involved in the fighting that day and the resulting casualties, it is clear that the violence was triggered by many complex issues both personal and political. The fact that these grievances are driving certain individuals to fight and kill others in civilian settlements is an indication that the community have become entangled in this conflict by virtue of where their homes are located. The very nature of the conflict, exacerbated by tribal tensions and rumour, further indicates that until the personal and political differences are somehow resolved, the civilians of Malakal remain at threat.

Upon hearing the news from members of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan (ECS) on the ground and other reports, Archbishop Daniel Deng, along with Bishop Paul Yugusuk, Assistant Bishop of Torit and two support staff travelled to Malakal on Tuesday 29th March, spending 5 days there. Their going was a strong show of solidarity in Malakal's time of sorrow and mourning. The team also held a two-day workshop on the themes of healing of wounds, reconciliation, and advocacy for 75 pastors from the Presbyterian, Pentecostal, the Episcopal and the Sudan Interior Church (SIC) for learning, prayers and worship. The trip was concluded by a powerful session of community prayers along the themes of honesty and forgiveness, in the centre of town by the River Nile.

Welcome and Media

Upon arrival on the Tuesday, the delegation from Juba were met by many jubilant Mothers Union members and pastors with songs of praise. After a short time, they were taken to All Saints Cathedral Malakal where they met the pastors who had gathered in anticipation of their arrival. The ECS Bishop of Malakal, Rt Rev. Hilary Garang formally welcomed the archbishop and his team on behalf of the pastors and lay people of Malakal Town. Archbishop Daniel shared his message of greeting and condolence but also encouraged the pastors to be strong for their



The participants welcome Archbishop Daniel and his delegation

communities and to listen carefully to the teaching over the days ahead as it would be important for the sake of the whole state for them to implement what they had heard. The rest of the group were introduced and given a few minutes to greet the pastors. Then the formal welcoming was brought to an end and the delegation left for their accommodation at the South Sudan Hotel.



L-R: Mr Johnson Amum Alan, Archbishop Daniel Deng, and Bishop Hilary Garang

After a short while, Bishop Hilary escorted Archbishop Daniel to Radio Malakal where he was given the opportunity to announce his arrival and the proposed prayers for Friday afternoon. In a fairly large studio, Archbishop Daniel was welcomed by the director for programmes, Mr Johnson Amum Alan, and the radio technician, Mr Shar James Kin. In his message, Archbishop Daniel appealed to all people to unite themselves and be peaceful for their own sake and to allow for the development of their town and state. He encouraged people to live well together despite

their differences of tribe, language, or custom, especially when the people of Malakal had voted so peacefully during the self-determination referendum for southern Sudan a few months before. Additionally, he urged all people to make an effort to come together for confession and healing that Friday.

The workshop begins

As usual, the workshop began with prayers and a short devotion led by Rt Rev Paul Yugusuk. The focal scripture was taken from Proverbs 3:7-8. From it, Bishop Paul spoke about obedience to God. Obedience to God, he said, is like the healing of wounds and release of pains. Upper Nile State has long been the flashpoint for violence and it is commonly thought that peace for southern Sudanese could not be attained without a peaceful settlement of the disputes in Upper Nile. Therefore, Bishop Paul urged the

participants to accept and teach a spirit and attitude of peace, and obedience to God. Speaking metaphorically, if everyone in the community were able to adopt an attitude of obedience, it would lead to better health of the communal body and the country generally. Archbishop Daniel added that the pastors of the churches of Malakal are one body in Christ even with their differences and that their strength would come by working together. After the devotion and with the group fully motivated, Bishop Paul began the workshop with the first presentation of the day: Healing of Wounds. The following day,



Top: Bishop Paul with the participants
Bottom: The participants together after the conference

the participants were taught practical conflict resolution and advocacy techniques. Both Bishop Paul and Archbishop Daniel intertwined anecdotes and bible verses with practical tips on how to advocate effectively and resolve conflict in one's community. The main points of their presentations can be found at the end of the report.

The ecumenical peace committee



Bishop Paul Yagusuk with the Upper Nile Inter-Church Peace Committee

At the end of the workshop, the time came to select the members of what would eventually become the Upper Nile Inter-Church Peace Committee. The participants were asked to nominate the members from amongst themselves. Eventually members representing each of the SCC member churches present were selected. The next day, the committee nominated the Chair, Secretary, Finance Secretary and Information Secretary amongst themselves. The different members and their positions are as follows:

- ↳ Rev. Canon George Sebit Yorama (ECS) as Chair
- ↳ Rev. Pin Juok Adoror (Presbyterian) as Secretary
- ↳ Rev. Akim Ottor Jawanyding (SIC) as Finance Secretary
- ↳ Rev. Jokino Nyejak Kauker (Pentecostal) as Information Secretary
- ↳ Rev. Mama Victoria Agau Kuek (ECS) as a Member
- ↳ Rev. Philip Ayok Akol (Pentecostal) as a Member
- ↳ Rev. Yohannes Akich Okony (Presbyterian) as a Member
- ↳ Rev. Peter Othow Ajang (SIC) as a Member

As no Catholic or Evangelical Presbyterian members were able to attend the workshop, they were informed to select and send their representatives to join the committee as soon as they could.

In their discussions, the group spoke about their mission and vision. They agreed that they would be responsible for mobilising the community on different peaceful issues. They also agreed to have joint fellowship, visit each other's churches, get to know each other better, and sincerely work together for the peace of Upper Nile. They all acknowledged that the task ahead of them was not easy, especially as many committees had been formed and had fallen apart. However, they were determined that this committee would not meet the same fate. The immediate task ahead of them is to plan and mobilize for an **Upper Nile State Conference** on peace and reconciliation as was recommended by participants of the workshop. They hope that representatives from churches, traditional community leaders, and the government in Upper Nile's 13 counties will convene to discuss the fighting that has

taken place in their state, and Upper Nile's anticipated trajectory should the fighting continue. It is thought that an open discussion on potential dividends of peaceful coexistence might discourage those who might otherwise fight and ultimately prolong the suffering of themselves and others.

The committee will need much prayer and technical support as they organise themselves for this great task so please pray for them; if you have expertise which will be of use to them or would like information on how you can help, please contact Rebecca Coleman, the International Coordinator in the Office of the Archbishop, on international@sudan.anglican.org.

Meetings with local government

Before the prayers, Archbishop Daniel visited the offices of the Governor, HE Simon Kun Poc and the Minister for Gender and Social Welfare HE Martha Nyamal Choat. He encouraged them both to keep up the good work that they were doing and assured them that they were in his prayers. They were both very happy to see him again and learn that he had returned to Malakal (his last trip being just before the self-determination referendum for the south when he led a High Level Committee for Reconciliation between the Government of Southern Sudan and renegade General George Athor)



L-R: Bishop Hilary Garang, Archbishop Daniel Deng, HE Simon Kun Poc, HE Martha Nyamal Choat, Director for Religious Affairs, Mr Isaac Nydng

Friday prayers



The ECS Choir leading the worship

The local community of Malakal Town came out in force to the ecumenical prayers held in the government town hall on Friday afternoon. An old Land Rover with a mounted megaphone had been the instrument for disseminating information about the prayers before the day and as a result, the hall, with a maximum capacity of 600 or so people was full that day. Proceedings began with impressive performances from the choirs of the Episcopal and

the Presbyterian churches. After that, the Acting Regional Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches, Mr Isaac Nyding welcomed all the guests and invited Bishop Hilary to speak. On behalf of the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church who was unfortunately sick at the time, and all the local church leaders of the SCC member churches, Bishop Hilary thanked the Archbishop for coming to Malakal. 'He was not invited; the Spirit led him here,' said Bishop Hilary. As a



Archbishop Daniel and Bishop Hilary reading the lesson

public update, he spoke of the new ecumenical peace committee that had been formed out of the two-day workshop. They would be working on fostering a spirit of peace and discouraging tribalism through specific teaching on these topics in different parts of Upper Nile state. Lastly, Bishop Hilary thanked the Governor of Upper Nile, HE Simon Kun Poc, and the Minister of Gender and Social Welfare, HE Martha Nyamal Choat, for supporting the idea of a special prayer event and for permitting the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare (and formerly also the Ministry of Religious Affairs) for releasing the funds necessary for the event to be take place.

Next came a reading from Luke 11: 17-20, a passage on the theme of a divided kingdom, and a song. Archbishop Daniel then rose to speak. The passage from Luke was the inspiration for

his message, which was naturally on the theme of tribalism in Malakal. He began by expressing his thanks to God for the chance to be with the people at that time. Then he spoke of the need of the people of Malakal to cry for forgiveness from God. He related that in biblical times, the king would call the people together if there had been a calamity. In this instance the governor was doing the same. Therefore, as a crowd had indeed gathered, it was very important to cry to God for forgiveness and healing. Coming to the causes of the recent fighting, he urged the community of Malakal especially, but also all southern Sudanese to live as one. 'No one tribe can take Upper Nile for itself,' he said, 'because divided, a kingdom will fall. There is no such thing as tribalism in Jesus Christ. Tribalism is a cancer in our lives and it causing us to kill one another.' Using the example of the death of Abel at the hands of his brother Cain and the hardship that he subsequently suffered shows, Archbishop Daniel explained that no dividends come from division and fighting. The people of Malakal must no longer be obsessed about tribe and



Archbishop Daniel addresses the congregation

where people are from because with that, you already have preconceived ideas in your mind about what those people are like. Thus, Archbishop Daniel advised those who had gathered.

The church and its priests did not escape reproach; 'Even our churches are tribal! Pastors are involving themselves in the conflict by praying to God to help them kill others.' Why has Christianity come to this? In the same vein, he remarked on how politicians, elected representatives of the people, had become misguided. 'Some politicians are creating problems between tribes. He added that when someone in politics has a problem with another person, that problem is spread to all the people.' Archbishop Daniel has often remarked that the church must maintain a critical distance from the government whilst advising and guiding where appropriate. It was with this principle in mind, that the participants of the two-day workshop selected people amongst themselves who would form the peace committee. In conclusion, he called for all residents of Malakal to be patient and allow the country to grow and for people to unite for God's sake and their own as South Sudan approaches Independence Day on July 9th.

After this message came the prayers. Bishop Paul called all the pastors present to the front where they were prayed for by the whole congregation. 'After all,' he said, 'if Malakal is to be healed the confession has to begin with us.' The pastors were encouraged to cry aloud to God, confess their sins and seek forgiveness for all that they had done wrong. There were many tears and much fervent prayer from all as the pastors were stood at the front. Similarly,



All the clergy come forward for prayer

when the Upper Nile Inter-Church Peace Committee proceeded to the front for blessing, the whole congregation was in prayer. This outpouring of emotion showed the importance of prayer and opening oneself up to God especially because just minutes before, there has been smiles and laughter as the congregation listened to Archbishop Daniel's bold address as if people were no longer carrying the grief from their recent experiences. Finally, Archbishop Daniel gave the benediction and the congregation processed out of the hall to more songs from the choir.



L-R: HE Martha Nyamal Choat, HE Simon Kun Puc, Archbishop Daniel Deng and Bishop Hilary Garang

Conclusion

It is difficult to say what would have happened in Malakal that week if the delegation from Juba had not gone. Many of the workshop participants, Makalal's local residents, and government officials were both touched and impressed with the workshop and the prayers that were held. It is fair to say that those events would not have happened when they did had it not been for the Archbishop Daniel and his team. However, the success of the workshop and the community prayer event was ultimately due to the willingness of the people to come together, learn and discuss key factors that affect their lives – a quality that cannot be manufactured for the community of Malakal in Juba. The Episcopal Church of the Sudan wishes to thank its partners Trinity Wall Street again for their continuing financial contribution to its peace work, which has allowed this and many other activities to take place. Something important was started with the workshop; importantly, something strong remains. Please join us in supporting the people of Malakal as they endeavour to attain a lasting peace.

(RAC)

The main points the on Healing of Wounds presentation:

- Step 1: Remember that God wants to heal you
- Step 2: Release your pain into the hands of Jesus
- Step 3: Realise the love God has for you
- Step 4: Realise God's will for your mind and receive it
- Step 5: Forgive Others
- Step 6: Realise who you are in Christ
- Step 7: Forgive yourself
- Step 8: 'Speak' to your pain

The Seven Steps to Resolving Conflict

Bible verse: Matthew 18:15, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."

1. If there is conflict
2. You
3. Go
4. To the person
5. In private
6. And discuss the problem
7. For the purpose of reconciliation

The main points on the Advocacy presentation:

Explanation of advocacy and advocates: defending or speaking on behalf of someone else

Jesus is our advocate

You must know your problems and be aware of your environment

You must take into account urgency and procedure

You must be aware of the problem and its nature

Important to analyse your effectivity

You must know your own strengths and weaknesses

Part of engaging in community is knowing about law and authority and especially your relationship with it

You must identify possible allies

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His Excellency Simon Kun Poc, Governor of Upper Nile State
Malakal
Upper Nile

Friday 1 April 2011

Your Excellency,

Greetings to you in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for giving us your time on Wednesday. It was very useful to have your assessment on the situation and encouraging to see that you were upbeat despite the circumstances. Through meeting you and other government officials, we have learned that the violence in Malakal is a threat to national security that must be contained and quashed immediately for the sake of all South Sudanese. I commend you and your local government for your dedication to the people at this time.

I, along with a delegation of other clergy and laymen, took the decision to visit Malakal following the troubling news we heard in Juba of the conflict that took place within the town last week. We arrived in Malakal on Tuesday (29th March 2011) and since we have been here, we have spent the majority of our time engaging with local community leaders in a two-day workshop which ended yesterday in the formation of an ecumenical peace committee. We have also had the opportunity to meet with a number of government officials.

The aforementioned peace committee, their official name being the **Upper Nile Inter-Church Peace and Reconciliation Committee**, have been charged with the responsibility of mobilizing all the different sections of the community and teaching on the issues of peace, reconciliation and community healing, methods of community cohesion, and grievance and conflict resolution.

The elected members of the committee and their positions are as follows

Chair: Rev. Canon George Sebit Yorama (ECS)

General Secretary: Rev. Ping Juok Adoror (Presbyterian)

Finance Secretary: Rev. Akim Ottor Jawanyding (Sudan Interior Church)

Information Secretary: Rev. Jokino Nyejak (Pentecostal)

Member: Rev. Victoria Agau Kuek (ECS)

Member: Rev. Philip Ayok Akol (Pentecostal)

Member: Rev. Yohannes Akich Okony (Presbyterian)

Member: Rev. Peter Othow Ajang (Sudan Interior Church)

Committee Advisor: Isaac Nyiding Opwony

Representation from the Catholic and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is forthcoming.

Considering their mandate and their longstanding roles as pastors, we expect that you and your administration will work together with them for the benefit of the community of Malakal and other relevant areas within the state.

As well as to form the ecumenical peace committee, in our workshop we have taught local pastors on topics such as healing of emotional wounds, peace-making, advocacy techniques, and community mobilization. The workshop was also an opportunity for us to learn what the key community issues are. From our assessment and our workshop we have gathered useful information on the current situation. See below a summary of our findings.

1. The differences in communities are often over
 - Land and border disputes
 - Lack of employment
 - Tribalism
 - Cattle raiding
 - Lawlessness
 - Lack of cooperation between the armed forces and the organized forces
 - Insecurity
 - Nepotism

2. Some of the root causes for these disputes are
 - Nepotism
 - Migration
 - Politics
 - Clash of cultures
 - Poverty
 - Lack of education
 - Tribalism

3. The effects of these disputes are
 - Death
 - Fear
 - Anger
 - Division
 - Under-development
 - Lack of trust

4. Possible solutions are
 - Prayer
 - Enforcement of law
 - Creation of job opportunities
 - Reconciliation efforts in the community
 - Provision of basic services such as water points

- Skills and vocational training

From these findings, our recommendation to you and your administration to consider and act upon is as follows. We propose that an all-church peace and reconciliation conference be held at the earliest possible convenience in Malakal town. Representatives from churches, traditional community leaders, and the government in all the 13 counties of Upper Nile State will be expected to attend. In short, we aim to bring these different groups to a neutral forum where they can talk to and learn from one another, and decide as a community what their way forward and future is and how this will be attained.

This recommendation is based on information some of your concerned constituents have shared with us. We hope for and expect then, full cooperation from the local government in this initiative as we believe that this conference, if successful, could potentially prevent any further outbreak of war in Upper Nile State and render the rest of South Sudan peaceful.

I and the Committee look forward to hearing your comments on what I have shared with you in this letter.

Yours in Christ

The Most Rev. Dr Daniel Deng Bul Yak
Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan

cc. Chairman of the Upper Nile Inter-Church Peace and Reconciliation Committee
cc. Acting State Secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches