

The Episcopal Church of the Sudan  
Justice Peace and Reconciliation Commission  
(JPRC) Assessment and Training on  
Reconciliation, Healing and Advocacy

Diocese of Yirol  
2-4 March 2011

## Introduction

Pray, teach and learn; this practice was adopted by the facilitators and participants of the JPRC workshop in the Diocese of Yirol last week. The delegation from Juba, comprising the Most Rev. Dr Daniel Deng Bul Yak, Rt. Rev. Paul Yugusuk, Rev. Canon Jamie Callaway from Trinity Parish, Wall Street, New York, President of the Mothers' Union Mama Elizabeth Aya, Evangelist Tony Henery and support staff, spent two days with Rt. Rev. Daniel Deng Abiel, Bishop of Yirol and thirty of his pastors with the aim of imparting knowledge on how best to apply Christian teaching to one's life and one's community. Yirol diocese is located in Lakes State, one of the states in South Sudan that is still plagued by violence resulting largely from cattle raiding and eloping. The presentations were varied, touching on the topics of reconciliation, healing and advocacy. The presentation points and scriptural references were carefully chosen to allow the presentations to talk directly to the issues the Yirol pastors were struggling to overcome. It was hoped that by the end of the workshop, the participants, made up of men and women, young and old, many of whom had come from volatile communities, would feel adequately empowered to go home and apply the teaching they had learned to their situations in order to reduce levels of trauma, anger and even murder. The following paragraphs detail this procedure.

## Presentations

The first day began with morning devotion led by the Rt. Rev. Paul Yugusuk. His wonderful ability to both move and entertain the participants proved for very engaging presentations. His reflection was inspired by the words in Genesis 3:7-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. He explained that just as Adam felt ashamed and conscious of his nakedness when he sinned in the Garden of Eden, we also feel ashamed in the presence of God after we have sinned and have the same desire as Adam did to 'hide ourselves'. However, if we repent and are reconciled to Christ, there is no longer any need to feel ashamed. Reconciled, we can be Christ's ambassadors and share the same message with the people. We do not need the metaphorical animals skin or leaves to cover ourselves with once we are reconciled to God. The participants responded with a combination of smiles and silent nods; it was wholly clear on their faces that Bishop Paul's brief introduction to Christian reconciliation was much food for thought.

Rev. Canon Jamie Callaway was then given the opportunity to introduce himself to the group. He spoke of the tremendous, indeed, miraculous success of the referendum against all the odds. He encouraged the group to consider this referendum miracle as the extension of God's work in the Sudan and that they should expect many more miracles to come as God continued to work with and through them. The presence of Rev Jamie and the inspiring words he gave conveyed a powerful message that day; even after such a momentous



Bishop Paul Yugusuk explaining Adam's shame and self-consciousness after he had sinned

referendum process, the international friends of the church and the world at large are still watching and walking with the Sudan.



Rev. Canon Jamie Callaway greeting the participants

Bishop Paul continued by briefly explaining the rules of workshop - no sleeping otherwise you run around the cathedral three times. No phone calls otherwise you stand and sing a song - and allowed the participants to briefly introduce themselves. In their introductions they gave what their expectations for the workshop were which are listed below.

- Reconciliation in the community
- Some solution to the problems between Yirol and Western Equatoria State
- To receive the power of God
- To work with our friends abroad
- Explain reconciliation especially in Awariel
- To learn how to keep peace
- To have emotional wounds healed
- To learn steadfastness as a priest

With these expectations in mind, Bishop Paul proceeded to teach on the first topic of the day, Seven Steps to Reconciliation. Over the course of one hour or so, he explained the importance of acknowledging one's pain and sorrow, releasing those feelings to God, realising the love God has for all of us and then extending that same love, spirit of forgiveness, and compassion, to others. Certainly, it would have been the first time some of the pastors there would have heard such a message about the hope in love and forgiveness that can be found in Christ.

Day two began with a short devotion and then Evangelist Tony Henery was next to present on the topics of reconciliation and healing. Although Tony is not ordained, he is a layman with a theological background and much academic training in christian theology. He



Evangelist Tony Henery describing one of his illustrations



Archbishop Daniel teaching on advocacy

encouraged the participants to allow their body and soul and heart to work together to allow for complete reconciliation. He also spoke of his experience as a child growing up angry at his father for having left the family when he was a baby. In time he reconciled his mind, heart and soul, forgave himself and so was able to forgive his father. He encouraged the pastors to take heart and face the challenges of reconciliation with courage. That once we are reconciled with God, it is important to take the right action.

Archbishop Daniel's presentation was on the importance of advocacy. He began by explaining advocacy as defending or speaking on behalf of someone else. Among his many important points he urged the pastors to make sure they were aware of their problems and environment, to think and plan carefully about their methodology, to analyse their own effectivity honestly and not to get angry when advocating as 'the advocate will be defeated if he or she allows anger to get to them.' He used the recent example of his reconciliation work in Northern Jonglei and Upper Nile as a case study stressing the importance of understanding how you engage with a problem, where your limits were as priests, and knowing what the appropriate governance and judicial authorities were doing too.

After the presentations followed group discussion where the groups identified problems, causes and actors. The common problems were cattle raiding and alcohol abuse, the causes identified were poverty and lack of employment, and the actors responsible for the problems being individuals from neighbouring clans.

## Turning point

All the presentations touched on what the pastors could do to overcome personal troubles or grievances to allow them to best serve themselves and serve their communities. To cement the spirit of healing, Bishop Paul asked all present to write down their pains and their confessions and then to pray. Once this was done, they were collected and burned in a milk tin at the foot of the cross on the pulpit. The act of destroying written confessions of one's sins and burdens is used around the world to draw a line under something in the past and affirm the idea of a fresh start. This exercise was poignant, and symbolic of the cleansing all can receive if they confess their sins and ask for forgiveness.

## Peace and Reconciliation Committee

Archbishop Daniel stressed the importance of continued implementation of strategic peace work by the church in Greater Yirol. Therefore, after all the presentations were given, the final task left was to select the members of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee who would be responsible for moving around Greater Yirol, teaching and mentoring on peace and reconciliation, and advocating for those who had suffered as a result of any community violence. After much deliberation the following people were selected:

- |     |                            |                     |
|-----|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1.  | Ven. Paul Tokmach Lual     | Chairperson         |
| 2.  | Ven. Simon Acuoth Tiok     | Vice Chairperson    |
| 3.  | Ven. Samuel Mapuor Dhieu   | Secretary           |
| 4.  | Rev. Abraham Ajak Granag   | Deputy Secretary    |
| 5.  | Ven. Mary Nyijur Tianic    | Treasurer           |
| 6.  | Rev. John Majier Madol     | Information officer |
| 7.  | Ven. Daniel Anyuon Kacual  | Liaison officer     |
| 8.  | Ven. Isaac Mayen Mapuol    | Member              |
| 9.  | Ven. Samuel Akec Makuei    | Member              |
| 10. | Rev. Elijah Atholueth Akec | Member              |
| 11. | Rev. James Bec Ayak        | Member              |
| 12. | Ven. Matha Adut Mamur      | Member              |



Bishop Paul in front of the burning confessions



Through the window can be seen one of the participants running around the church because he had fallen asleep during a presentation

This is the first time a committee of this sort has been formed within Yirol Diocese. They are determined through their teaching to definitively end the violence and pain that comes as a result of cattle raiding, their largest societal problem. A report on their progress and appealing for specific assistance will be sent after their reconnaissance is completed but for now, please remember them in your prayers as they begin this importance reconciliation work.

### Post workshop

For the next few days after the conference the delegation went around the varying deaneries to greet people and share the message of peace, reconciliation and healing

that they had been teaching on. In Bordit and Alerwei deaneries Mama Aya's advice to the people was to break their bonds with the violence enslaving them. She encouraged people to correct themselves without fighting and killing one another and instructed the women to talk to their children and husbands about the problems around them and to discourage them from engaging in violent acts. Archbishop Daniel also urged people to be serious about keeping peace to allow for greater development and easier living.

In the cathedral the next day, Archbishop Daniel addressed the congregation on the same issues. 'We must take peace to the communities before independence!' he said. As the heart of South Sudan, the people of Yirol should be especially conscious of keeping peace. He instructed them not to destroy their lives over wealth as when we die, we leave such things behind. He advised them not to revenge or harbour problems or burdens. If someone were to take something that belonged to them, they should allow the church and the local judiciary authorities to assist. He instructed the pastors to go to cattle camps and preach on these same issues. He also commented on how times had changed and that not too long ago the threat of women to remove all their clothing was enough to stop people fighting!

The Commissioner for Yirol West, HE Isaac Makur Kulang, was one of the many congregants in the cathedral that morning. He remarked that pastors are no longer encouraged by communities to pray for them as they had been during the war. Remembering Archbishop Daniel's last visit to Yirol where he spoke to and prayed with the cattle keepers, HE Kulang declared that there has been no more killing between the cattle keepers of Aliab and Atwot. This was wonderful news to hear, especially considering that movement, and thus raiding, is easier to carry out during the dry season. Additionally, Bishop Daniel's movement around Greater Yirol, mobilising the people to take the referendum seriously and vote if they had registered was very helpful. Therefore, the commissioner believed that the church's role in the community was crucial to peace and that on this issue, 'the church and government stand as one.' He also pledged to facilitate

the movement and transportation of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee should they require his help.

### Revelation

On Sunday evening, the night before the delegation were due to depart, Lay Reader Simon Mangar Majok visited them at their accommodation. The following is a summary of the story he told.

'I am Simon Mangar Majok. I am from the Aciec clan, a lay reader and master of Dinka language which I have been teaching for the last twelve years. Because of my service to the church and community, I was given land near the church to stay in. One day a friend came to visit. He asked me how I came to live there. I told him it had been given to me because I am a lay reader and a teacher. My friend pointed to the rubble across from my house. He said that was his father's house and that he wanted to stay with me until his son came to join me. Shortly, after this the man died. Then my son came and planted 2 mango trees.

'Some time later another man came along saying he was from the same clan as the dead man. He accused me of stealing his family land and living in his house. We went to court and I won my case. I was given my title documents and left. I came to learn that after my case, the judge who had been removed from the court and replaced by a chief from the Atwot clan. When a new judge was selected, I was taken to court again. This time, however, my land was taken from me, my title deeds seized and destroyed and the right to appeal in that or any other court denied.



Lay Reader Simon Mangar Majok whose heart has been softened by the teaching on healing and reconciliation

'Both the judge Samuel Mapet, Chariman of the Land Dispute Committee in Greater Yirol and the man suing me, Mr Matangel Mading Alak, SSRRC were from Atwot. The judgement was biased in favour of the Atwot clan and I was discriminated against. Yirol town I supposed to be for all; it is not clan land. I felt aggrieved and wanted to revenge so I went to my clan mobilised them to prepare to fight against the Atwot and create a massacre in the town. Plans were made and I returned to town to hear that the Archbishop along with a delegation were coming so I decided to wait. When I was asked to explain why I was attending the workshop I said I wanted to sit and listen to the teaching even though I was not an official participant and I was permitted to stay. When I heard the reconciliation teaching I was moved. I kept quiet and came to see Archbishop to explain myself and declare that I have abandoned these plans of violence. This teaching has changed his heart. I

have burned my confession and completely abandoned this plan. I'm now going back to my clan to dissuade them.'

This story summarises well the purpose of the delegation's mission and, moreover, highlights many important points. It narrates the tale of a man who has had his life changed from the Christian teaching he received on love, healing and forgiveness. Indeed, his decision to turn to the church rather than proceed with his plan to massacre people of the Atwot clan in Yirol town is admirable. However, it is indicative of the vices still prevalent in Sudan, of people exploiting their positions as community leaders or government officials to hurt ordinary people for their own gain, and of the residual trauma within people in Sudan that manifests in violent retaliation. Simon's decision to turn away from violence to peace, does not spell the end of general exploitation of the poor and discrimination on clan or tribal basis. In fact, it only underlines the further work that must be done to eradicate these things from Sudan completely.

Thanks

The Office of the Archbishop and the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission would like to express many thanks to Episcopal Relief and Development for mobilising the funds to make this mission possible. The workshop has proven to be pivotal to the future peace of Greater Yirol. Thanks also go to Trinity Wall Street and particularly the Rev Canon Jamie Callaway for his encouragement and his presence.

(RAC)



Archbishop Daniel, Bishop Daniel, Bishop Paul and Canon Jamie with the Peace and Reconciliation Committee