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MERF News

Septemebr 2024



Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

“Faithful, Fruitful and Cost-Effective Indigenous Missions!”

Sudan Needs the Gospel of Peace



Sudan Church choir

South of Egypt, upstream on the mighty Nile River, is the vast, largely arid country of Sudan. It is rich in resources. Formerly colonized by the British, it gained independence in 1956 to become the largest African country until South Sudan broke away in 2011.

The capital, Khartoum is in the north where the White Nile and the Blue Nile meet to form one mighty river. Sadly, Sudan has experienced little peace in the past 70 years. Soon after independence, northern Sudan’s Arab nationalism was replaced by Islamic fervour. Similar to the horrible armed civil conflict raging for the past year, rivalry between two dominant Islamic factions in Khartoum created instability. When the army general Gaafar Nimeiry from one faction became president, he appeased the other Saudi-backed faction

by imposing Islamic rule on all, including the large, mostly traditional Christian minorities.

The pro-Islamist military government of General Omar al-Bashir followed. It imposed Islamic rule and the Arabic language on the tribal African south. Through the witness of Western and Egyptian missionaries, these tribes were steadily converting to Christianity from different animist traditions.

South Sudan

The southern Sudanese rebelled and a very long and costly civil war followed. They received much support from African neighbours and on January 1, 2011, officially became independent as South Sudan, with its capital in Juba. Unlike the arid north, South Sudan is the lush,

marshy source of the White Nile, crisscrossed by waterways linking countless primitive villages of simple huts. The largest of many different tribal groups making up the rebel armies are the Dinka and the Nuer tribes.

Soon after independence, the armed forces of the Dinka tribe President Salva Kiir violently clashed with those of the Nuer tribe Vice President Riek Machar. This led to thousands of deaths and economic devastation. Perhaps more South Sudanese were killed in those clashes than in years of war with the Arab Khartoum-based government in the north. Repeated mediation by African leaders has resulted in a power-sharing arrangement in South Sudan. However, vio-

lent inter-tribal clashes still erupt from time to time.

Christian faith in Sudan

Christian faith in Sudan has a long and rich history, dating back to the first century after Christ when ancient Nubia embraced Christianity. From the 7th century, the Christian Nubian kingdoms were overcome by Islamic expansion, but the southernmost survived until the early 16th century. Southern Sudan (including what is now South Sudan) was long dominated by traditional tribal beliefs.

Christian foreign missionaries began preaching the gospel throughout Sudan from the mid-19th century and faithful,



Dardasha7 programme - Uncle Shaban

growing churches were established in both the north and the south. In 1964 most were expelled.

Exponential Growth

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the south of Sudan saw great numbers of conversions from animism to Christ. Yet, there were so few trained pastors that each was obliged to shepherd as many as ten different big village congregations of largely illiterate converts. So, in 2003 to train much needed spiritual leaders, MERF established a ministry centre just over the southern border in Lokichoggio, Kenya. Daily Nuer language Bible teaching radio broadcasts are aired. Also, three 3-month intensive biblical training courses annually are serving all tribes in what is now South Sudan. In addition, there is a very active ministry to the very needy local Kenyan largely primitive Turkana people.

Ministries in Sudan

In the Arabic-speaking north, when there was peace, MERF organized and supported biblical training conferences. A



Issa-alMasih programme --
What They Said About Jesus the Christ

weekly national ministry of radio and TV broadcasts is supported. MERF also supports faithful local Bible

schools as well as the Nile Theological College. These raise up Sudanese Christian leaders well-grounded in God's Word. Since the current devastating and destructive civil war broke out in April 2023, MERF has also been able to encourage and support some of the neediest Sudanese Christians. Many families are trapped to suffer danger, hunger, injury and even death in the brutal fighting of the well-armed warring armies. Please pray for lasting peace in Sudan.

The majority of Sudanese are Muslim, with little opportunity to hear the gospel of God's grace. MERF's wide-reaching Arabic gospel programs air daily on strong regional medium and short wave radio stations and 24/7 over the internet to make God's Word accessible to many millions. Please pray that the comforting message of hope in Christ brings abiding fruit among many Sudanese.

Recent Responses

N and F are two single sisters. They learned of Christ's ways from their parents who

"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

— Galatians 6:10

were nominal Muslims before conversion. Both sisters are elementary school teachers in Khartoum and also care for their widowed mother and elderly aunt. For several years, they have enjoyed listening to our gospel programs with their mother and aunt. They report having learned to carefully speak about Christ to other Muslim friends and neighbours. A few weeks ago, they shared: "... We are thankful to have smart phones. Most of the time we still have access to the internet, despite the troubles in our city. What we hear daily and read on **Issa-alMasih.com** makes our walk with God stronger and our witness to others wiser..."

Several radio listeners write describing the devastating impact on many of both the civil war and major floods. Pray for local churches seeking to provide care in their immediate neighbourhoods.

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Dardasha7 programme - Karim's Coffeeshop