

Where despair prevails, South Sudan churches issue Easter hope message



Christians in procession on Easter Sunday 2017, in Pawel, a village in South Sudan's Jonglei State. © Paul Jeffrey/ACT

Apr 20, 2017

For most of the world's newest nation, wracked by internal conflict, joy seems far away, and yet for Christians, Easter is still a time of hope. A recent message from the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) says the Resurrection reminds us that even in this world there is "goodness and light with triumph".

In an "Easter message of hope for the people of South Sudan – 2017" the council of churches reminded the South Sudan people that "at this time of year we recall that Christ Jesus too suffered."

"As a baby he was displaced from his country and had to flee as a refugee to a neighbouring country with Mary and Joseph (Matthew 2:13-15)."

The Easter message was signed by the chair of the SSCC, Rev. Peter Gai Lual Marrow of the Presbyterian Church of Sudan and the council's general secretary, Father James Oyet-Latansio, a Roman Catholic.

Meanwhile, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is accompanying the SSCC and the All Africa Conference of Churches at a meeting on overcoming hunger and sustaining justice and peace in the Horn of Africa, taking place in Nairobi on 14-17 May with church leaders from East Africa. Although the situation is the most dire in South Sudan and Somalia, other countries in the region are also suffering from food crisis as a result of both man-made and natural calamities, and the WCC's programme executive for advocacy in Africa Dr Nigussu Legesse will attend.

The WCC is also inviting member churches and partners for a global day of prayer on 21 May.

When South Sudan became independent on 9 July 2011, after decades of brutal war with Khartoum government forces in Sudan, the world was filled with optimism, since the churches had played a key role in helping broker the process.

But civil conflict began in 2013 and has since continually worsened.

"Killing, looting, raping, arbitrary detention, torture, tribalism, terror, fear, anxiety, hate speech and lies, displacement, hunger, poverty, famine, corruption, and economic collapse continue in our young nation, seemingly unabated. These things are evil and we cannot pretend that they do not exist," say the church leaders.

In South Sudan there are an estimated 5.5 million people currently severely food insecure and at least 7.5 million people across the country - almost two thirds of the population - need humanitarian assistance.

The SSCC's message recalls how Jesus lived as "a humble manual worker under an oppressive regime, was falsely accused by corrupt power-seeking leaders, was unjustly arrested and imprisoned, and finally was tortured to death for his opposition to the behaviour of those in power. Many South Sudanese have suffered the same fate."

"The Resurrection he offers us is certainly connected with the Eternal Life promised to us, but it is not only something for the future... The Resurrection reminds us that even in this world, evil and death will not continue for ever; goodness and light will triumph."

[Ecumenical Network sends pastoral message of support to churches and people of South Sudan](#) (WCC press release of 5 April 2017)

[Amid conflict and looming famine in South Sudan, the church offers hope](#) (WCC press release of 31 March 2017)

[WCC member churches in South Sudan](#)