

Annual Report 2016

SUDANESE REFORMED CHURCH

General Synod

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Sudanese Reformed Church (SRC) started in Khartoum, Sudan in February 1992. She was established and restructured as Christian Reformed denomination in October, 2005. In God's grace she has now grown into sixteen (16) churches twelve (12) in South Sudan and four (4) in Sudan plus 18 groups in IDPs and refugee camps with total membership of 6000. Contextually, SRC is committed to a cross cultural vision of the church.

The horror of war in South Sudan

South Sudan was plunged into brutal civil war in Mid-December 2013 when President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riak Machar ran into political disagreements just two years after its independence from Sudan. This resulted in eruption of horrible and tribal civil war in which tens of thousands were killed and half of the population of the new nation displaced from their homes. Even after a peace agreement was brokered in August, 2015 there were sporadic outbreaks of fighting. Last July, the rival forces to the agreement clashed militarily in Juba resulting in loss of hundreds of lives and tens of thousands of Juba residents fleeing to the neighboring Uganda and DRC. This has placed the peace agreement into dilemma and inevitable return to full scale of civil war.



Needy IDPs waiting to receive relief food items

In this horrific civil war a lot of atrocities have been committed against civilians. There has been wide spread of ethnic target killing, displacement, high rates of death, injuries, burning of houses and churches, sexual violence, looting, disrupted livelihoods. All these have resulted into human suffering, poverty, severe food insecurity, major malnutrition crisis and subsequent famine.

Intolerant Islam in Sudan

In Sudan there is civil war going on in Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile and Dar Fur. The aforementioned areas are predominately inhabited by black Africans with population of Muslims, Christians and animists. Sudan is predominately Islamic nation. Christians and animists are the minority. Christians are being persecuted and marginalized because of their faith. By law churches are not allowed to acquire new lands and even not to renovate the existing church buildings that were built by the missionaries. Employments for Christians are always denied in both public and private sectors. SRC in Sudan is laboring in intolerant society.

Compassion at Tough Time

The fighting in last July, 2016 in Juba has killed hundreds of peoples; many residents of Juba have been forced to leave their homes. This has created a dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation. Graciously, with generous assistance of Rev. Arend Reitsema, some friends from the Netherlands and loving friends in Juba, SRC was able to purchase some relief items for



Needy IDPs receiving relief items at Khor Woliang

needy IDPs in Juba. This included maize flour, beans, edible oil. The relief was distributed to 946 households who live in Mangateen, Jebel, UNMISS Thongbiny and Khor Woliang. Relief money was also sent to SRC needy IDPs in Malakal, Bentiu and Bor since there were no way to send relief items to those areas due to absence of transport accessibility. It was a demonstration of Christ's compassion at tough time when it seemed nobody was ready to show mercy.



Distribution of used clothes for needy women and children at SRC Managteen

In addition to relief food items, used clothes were distributed. The clothes that people used while they were on run have worn out. Thus 300 pieces of women and children used clothes were purchased and other 130 pieces were donated by individuals in Juba. The clothes were given to those whose clothes have worn out. The clothes were received with great joy and thanksgiving.

Looming Famine in South Sudan

Based on UN updated report December, 2016, there are more than three million IDPs, 1.1 million refugees in the neighboring countries (Uganda, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan). And because of widespread insecurity and escalation of violence 5.8 million are food insecure. Inevitably, South Sudan is under famine. There are already reports that people are beginning to die of hunger in many parts of South Sudan including Juba the capital city.

Growing church in midst of chaos and suffering

SRC congregations in both Sudan and South Sudan are facing a lot of hardships. There is continuous Islamic persecution in Sudan and brutal tribal civil war in South Sudan. Many congregations and small groups are being confined within UNMISS POC camps or at houses. In this context what always matters are how to stay alive, how to maintain hope when suffering and chaos seem endless. These continuous struggles have created a deep dependence on God for survival and protection, safety from war attacks and religious persecution.

By God's grace and mercy, the ministry of SRC is managing to stay alive in promoting Reformed Faith in spite of all the hardships and suffering. Even though the situation seems bleak, new congregations are emerging in the IDPs and refugee camps. The number of SRC membership has increased rapidly. Comparatively SRC membership used to be 3000 before the eruption of civil in South Sudan but now she has more than 6000 total membership. There are opened opportunities to witness and assurance of hope in the midst of chaos, war, suffering and persecution. It is a growing church in midst of chaos and suffering.

SRC General Situation

The general situation of SRC is both discouraging and hopeful. Why? SRC is laboring in areas with widespread military conflict, social upheaval and religious intolerance. Many areas are still too troubles and insecure to start planting new churches. Practically, SRC possess no adequate buildings, office equipment and even vehicle to facilitate her mission and daily activities. Because of the war many members are trapped in relative poverty, displacement and famine. The ministry has no sufficient resources and capacity to cope with physical need of the congregational members and communities around them. The pastors and evangelists that are laboring in their midst have no salaries or financial rewards. Lack of financial resources is sometimes source of disagreement to some



Some SRC members at Mangateen queuing to receive relief items

SRC leaders. Some feel totally abandoned and cut off. Although SRC has some international connections with global Reformed family but she is in fact an orphan. She has no parent or matured Reformed denomination that stands with her at tough time and when in crisis.

In spite of the discouraging situation SRC has survived difficult days when it seemed totally crashed. There is a glimpse of hope that the ministry of SRC is passing the test of time and will make impact through her effort in promoting Reformed faith in both Sudan and South Sudan.

Trauma Healing Training

War and suffering have traumatized many people in South Sudan and Nuba Mountains. In Response, Word Renew, South Sudan in partnership with Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church conducted nine (9) days trauma healing training for 50 participants in November, 2016. SRC participated with 16 participants and the rest were mainly drawn from South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church, Christian Brotherhood Church and Sudanese Church of Christ. The participants expressed many of their heartbreaking stories of trauma. The training was timely, inspiring and uplifting. The participants were equipped with skills of trauma counseling guides. It is hoped that they will be instruments of bringing healing and reconciliation to their various communities in and around Juba.

Bible Distribution

Sixty three (63) bibles were bought. This includes 13 English bibles (NIV); 25 Arabic and 25 Nuer bibles. These bibles were dispatched to UNMISS IDPs camps in Makalal, Bentiu Bor and Juba. The bibles have been given to some key leaders who are leading small groups in those camps. Bibles are needed greatly in those camps. There is a great thirst for the gospel.

1st historical Visit

Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church was visited by first Reformed brethren from the Netherlands. Rev. Arend Reitsema and his wife Merrel Keyes made their historical visit to Juba as from 17th - 23rd February, 2016. During their visit Rev. Reitsema conducted a three-day biblical leadership training for some potential congregational leaders, preached God's word on Sunday Worship Service and visited some IDPs camps around Juba. His wife Merrel gave some biblical reflection to some congregational women. They were not able to visit other congregations across South Sudan because many areas are not accessible. The visit to Juba was indeed fraternal and expression of Reformed family unity around the globe.



BSRC participants during leadership training sessions facilitated by Rev. Arend Reitsema

SRC Synod Office Foundation Completed

SRC General Synod has no office building and renting an office is not also a wise choice since SRC has no resources to do that. Hence SRC synod has initiated to start building an office. 80% of the foundation has been completed. Once completed it will be the main SRC Synod office building. However, the project progress was interrupted by conflict which erupted again in Juba last July, 2016. Up to now construction has not been resumed due to hyperinflation, rampage insecurity and the challenge of raising fund locally because many of SRC members are trapped in displacement and poverty that has been caused by war in South Sudan.

Some SRC Challenges

SRC faces a considerable number of challenges in her ministry and here below are the main ones:

1. There is a weak financial support and limited resources. (it is extremely difficult to raise some resources locally due to mass displacement, high rate of poverty and widespread insecurity)
2. 32 pastors and evangelists who are sacrificing their lives for the cause of Reformed faith are without salaries or loving gifts to keep them at least alive and appreciate their sacrificial labor in promoting Reformed Faith in hostile situation.
3. SRC is laboring among IDPs who are destitute struggling only for survival.
4. SRC is still in her infancy. She always feels isolated while being surrounded by well-established churches that have good international connection and linkage particularly at time of crisis.
5. Many of SRC leaders have a low theological education and ill-equipped because they were poorly educated and untrained in the Christian leadership. This makes SRC to have poor leadership capacity.
6. SRC Synod has not been held since 2013 due to logistical limitation and high cost of flight fares to bring delegates together for assembly.
7. No infrastructural development due to limited financial resources.

Focus in Juba

The insecurity in South Sudan has made many areas inaccessible and difficult to open new mission stations. Hence SRC leadership without neglecting other congregations laboring in tough areas is hoping to focus on Juba. SRC wants to consolidate her presence and make Juba the hub of Reformed witness and preparing ground to later mission extension to other areas of South Sudan and Sudan.

SRC by the beginning of year 2017 will make survey to find suitable locations to plant new churches in and around Juba. Look for more lands in Juba to consolidate and extend the mission. Prepare and develop new potential leaders for future leadership in hope of impacting communities in Juba and beyond. This will include looking for land where to establish multi-training center. The main focus of this center will be to train and produce leaders who are more qualified with qualities and training to lead SRC.

What SRC hopes to do in 2017?

1. Celebrate Silver Jubilee (SRC will be 25-year-old in 2017)
2. Celebrate the 500 year of Reformation with the global Reformed church.
3. Reopen two churches closed in late 2013 and plant two new churches in different parts of Juba; establish a network of Reformed churches with a sense of being community with a distinct Reformed identity and consolidate mission in Juba.
4. Establish two primary schools for the IDPs in Juba (many children are out of schools)
5. Provide opportunity to train and develop leaders for the valuable contribution to the future of SRC and development of South Sudan and Sudan.

Rev. Kewy Ismail Geng

Rev. Kewy Ismail Geng is a pastor of Immanuel Sudanese Reformed Church in Malakal and the President of SRC General Synod. He was caught up in the conflict in Malakal, 2013. His wife delivered on the road while they were running to UNMISS camp. By God's grace they reached UN camp safely. They were in the camp for six months after which his wife and 4 kids managed to escape to refugee in Khartoum, Sudan. He was separated from his family for nearly three years. It was last October, 2016 that he managed to travel to Juba with UN flight. Two weeks later he travelled to Khartoum to reunite with his family. While there he had a privilege of visiting and encouraging SRC congregations in Khartoum.



Rev. Kewy Ismail pastor of Immanuel Sudanese Reformed Church and President of SRC General Synod

Annual Pastoral Conference

Rev. Magadam Sharief elding attended the Annual Pastor Conference in Beirut, Lebanon. Rev. Sharief Elding is the Vice President of SRC General Synod and pastor of Johnmadid Sudanese Reformed Church in Khartoum. The conference was organized by Evangelical Church of Gasr Eldobara, Cairo Egypt. It is an annual pastoral conference that brings together key pastors from the Middle East and North Africa for retreat, biblical reflection and prayers.

SRC congregations

The below listed congregations are struggling SRC congregations in the two Sudanese countries:

A. Sudan

1. Ombada Sudanese Reformed Church, Khartoum
2. Johnmadid Sudanese Reformed Church, Khartoum
3. Dar el Salam Sudanese Reformed Church, Khartoum
4. Dallami Sudanese Reformed Church, Dallami Nuba Mountains

B. South Sudan

1. Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church, Mangateen Juba
2. Cornerstone Sudanese Reformed Church, Kabu Juba (closed and hoped to reopen soon)
3. Ebenezer Sudanese Reformed Church, Gudele West Juba (meeting in house)
4. Grace Sudanese Reformed Church, Khor Woliang Juba (closed, reopened and now meet under a tree)
5. Holy Family Sudanese Reformed Church, Malakal (inside UN IDPs camp)
6. Hope Sudanese Reformed Church, Bentiu (inside UN IDPs camp)
7. Immanuel Sudanese Reformed Church, Malakal (inside UN IDPs camp)
8. Rock of Life Sudanese Reformed Church, Aweil
9. Redeemer Sudanese Reformed Church, Bor (inside UN IDPs camp)
10. Shalom Sudanese Reformed Church, Aweil (deserted because of famine in the area)
11. Yei Sudanese Reformed Church, Yei (deserted because of civil war).
12. Abbenoum Sudanese Reformed Church, Abbenoum.

In addition to these listed instituted churches, there are 18 small groups in UN IDPs camps and two churches in refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Prospective theological students

The below mentioned SRC candidates will be joining Nile Theological College in 2017. The college used to be in Malakal but has been moved to Juba because of insecurity. They are:

1. Yohana Bol Dau – will pursue Bachelor Degree in Theological study
2. Deng Akol - will pursue Diploma in Theological Studies
3. Rev. Kewy Ismail will rejoin Nile Theological College in Juba to complete three semesters that he did not complete in Malakal as result of the war.

Need for Scholarships

There are thousands of students who have sat for South Sudan National Certificate but could not access colleges/universities. Due to the ongoing violence education system has collapsed and many parents are not able to send their children to study abroad. There is a great need to provide the next generation study opportunities in various fields and to inspire them to follow footsteps of Reformed witness in the heart of Africa and along the frontier of Islam. SRC needs some scholarships in various fields of studies for her youngsters.



Grace SRC property fenced with assistance of Good Samaritan

SRC Immediate needs

1. Diaconal assistance for the needy in South Sudan particularly SRC members who are living in UNMISS IDPs camps.
2. Diaconal support to 32 pastors and evangelists who are laboring in the midst of IDPs across South Sudan, Nuba Mountains and Khartoum.
3. Bibles and Christian literatures.
4. Training of trauma healing, reconciliation and peace.
5. Parent or denomination which might support and give counsel and encouragement to SRC in her struggles.

What is the Lord calling SRC leaders to do at this chaotic situation?

In spite of all these challenging situations SRC leaders are always praying and asking what is God calling them to do.

Here below are some key activities that SRC is doing in her Reformed witness:

1. Initiating continuous Gospel witness in IDPs camps. More than 800 souls have come to salvation through the witness of SRC members in eight (8) camps across South Sudan.
2. Encouraging work of compassion by sharing whatever little SRC members have with those who have nothing. This gesture of mercy has provided life-saving support.
3. Counseling those who are affected so that they get recovered from war trauma, deep wounds and pain of the brutal civil war.
4. Rebuilding and consolidating SRC mission in Juba.
5. Establishing primary schools for IDPs children beginning with Juba.
6. Prepare, plan and setup mission strategies that strengthen the capacity of SRC to make a significant Reformed witness in South Sudan and Sudan. Plan and prepare for seizing opened opportunities in the future.

Prayer Needs

1. Diaconal support to 32 pastors and evangelists who are laboring among the IDPs in South Sudan. They continue to hang on with Christian Reformed witness despite all the hardships. They are making heroic sacrifices for the cause of Reformed faith.
2. Needed infrastructures: completion of SRC Synod office in Juba.
3. Establishment of two IDPs primary schools in Mangateen and Khor Woliang in Juba.
4. Diaconal assistance to SRC most needy members particularly in IDPs camps around Juba, Malakal, Bor and Bentiu.
5. 1 Toyota pick-up for evangelism/mission.
6. Logistical provision for SRC synod to be held in 2017.
7. Safety and protection of SRC pastors and evangelists laboring in areas of high risk and hostility.