

An Invitation from the Moderator to join Christians around the world in Prayer and Fasting for Peace in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo

Pope Francis has invited Christians to pray and fast on Feb. 23rd (which is in the week that starts Lent for those Christians on the Gregorian Calendar) for peace in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo; the World Council of Churches is joining his call.

A portion of the letter from the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit , the General Secretary of the WCC reads:

“In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 4.3 million people are displaced throughout the country and 13.1 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance throughout the country this year.

In South Sudan, 2 million people have fled the young nation as refugees and about 1.9 million people are internally displaced, over the past four years of conflict- with 7 million people inside the country - that is almost two-thirds of the remaining population - still need humanitarian assistance.

Children, young men, and women have been among the most affected. Millions of women and girls are exposed to gender-based violence in these crisis-affected areas.

The churches and communities are dedicated and present in these communities, accompanying the affected people through these challenging times. We acknowledge the courageous and hopeful work that carries on each day to serve the people in need. May the prayers of all Christians on 23 February for the gift of peace be a sign of solidarity and closeness to those suffering in South Sudan and DRC.”

Clearly the need is great and we are invited to pray, lifting up the people of this region of the world before God in prayer in a special way on Feb. 23rd. While these difficult situations seem far away in Africa, they are really very close to us. A family supported by the Presbytery of Winnipeg comes from South Sudan. I am in regular contact with clergy in Winnipeg who fled the DRC.

I realize fasting is not a usual Presbyterian spiritual practice. For those who are unused to this practice or who for health reasons are unable to fast I offer another suggestion which I intend to take up. On Feb. 23rd, instead of exploring social media, take the time you would use doing that to pray for these crises, for God’s mercy to flow. So fast from social media (or from watching TV, or...) and turn that time into prayer for South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Please invite others to this global out-pouring of prayer that our voices may be joined with millions of others around the world on Feb. 23rd. If possible please find a way to

announce this special day of prayer this Sunday.

PRAYER:

God of all mercy, we pray for the people of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Bring an end to the violence; that people may go about their lives free from threat and fear of violence.

Bring an end to the violence against women and girls; bring an end to the recruitment of child soldiers.

Heal these countries, heal the communities that make up these lands.

Your prophets of old dreamed of a time when swords would be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. Bring a time now when guns are turned into builders' tools and jeeps became school busses.

We hold up before you Christian sisters and brothers who seek to walk with the hurting, to protect the vulnerable, and care for those who weep. Strengthen them by your Spirit that they may run and not be weary and walk and not faint.

Transform the hearts of leaders – political leaders, tribal leaders, warlords – bring all to desire peace over victory and humility over greatness.

We rejoice that we can join with millions and millions of Christians in praying this day for South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Peter Bush, Moderator
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