

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN
BISHOP'S SPEECH AT THE LUTHERAN EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION OF
FINLAND (LEAF) CONVENTION JUNE 2012**

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Bishop Sudan and South Sudan**

Introduction

Dear Brethren in the Lord,

This brief history and management plan elaborates the ways in which our Lutheran community in South Sudan and Sudan can be understood and shall be equipped for the task of leading its congregations in a deep mission of evangelizing the broken-hearted communities. It further demonstrates different levels of church developments in our new born country of South Sudan.

Following the over 20 years violence including two civil wars in which more than two million people lost their lives, four million were displaced and millions of properties lost, our country has finally attained its independence from the republic of Sudan on 9th July 2011, and many more problems still remains unsolved. Even now you may have been hearing that we are in the brinks of war with Sudan. These problems range from political, economic and even religious problems. For instance:- The boarder demarcations between South Sudan and Sudan, Oil exploration which is at the border of South Sudan and Sudan, the political identity in the South Sudan, difference in creed among others.

Brethren in the Lord,

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan (ELCS) was established in November 1993 in Juba now the capital City of South Sudan by the late Rev. Andrew Mbugo Elisa, who became the first native ordained pastor in 1999, and first Bishop in 2006, before he died in 2009.

In 1998, the church moved its center from Juba to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan in order to create more congregations to answer the needs of the people of Sudan. The aim of establishing this was:

1. To meet the spiritual needs of the Sudanese people through the right teaching of the Holy Scriptures and in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.
2. To evangelize all people in Sudan regardless of their color and creed.
3. To meet the social demands of the people by creating services such as education, health and social care for the needy.
4. To edify the believers of Lutheran communion.

The real expansion begun in 1998 when three centers were opened in Khartoum with branches extending to Port-Sudan, the major Sudanese town in the Red Sea region about 1000km east of Khartoum. In 2000, the church was further expanded to the Blue Nile region bordering the Republic of Ethiopia, Upper Nile State of the republic of South Sudan and many others.

In 2005, a peace agreement was signed in Kenya between the Islamic Northern government and the Christian Southern rebels who have now become the rulers of the new republic of South Sudan. The South Sudan is rich in oil, which if properly managed, would improve the country's progressive development and shall elevate it from being the poorest country to equalize the rich nations of the world. The Islamic north has complex plan to spread Islam not only in the South but throughout the region and Africa at large.

The New Administration

In October 11th-13th 2011, our church held a general convention in Yambio where the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan and South Sudan was passed after which I was elected and consecrated as Bishop of Sudan and South Sudan by Most Rev. Christian Ekong, the Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria on October 15th 2011.

In 2003, after my return from Tanzania where I studied in Mwika Lutehran Theological College, I was ordained into priesthood in 2004. In 2006, after the signing of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement, (CPA), Rt. Rev. Andrew Mbugo assigned me in Juba congregation the capital of South Sudan.

I served in Juba as the pastor in charge and later I was appointed the dean of Central and Eastern Equatoria Deanery Juba. I held this position until last year October when I was elected the second Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan and South Sudan.

Vision:

The vision of the new administration as it derived from John 3:16 is that, "Anyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." I wish to see a believing church in Jesus Christ, the savior and the redeemer. Jesus shall make everything possible for the church in Sudan to obtain grace and wisdom only if the church believes strongly in its head the Christ.

The Holy Spirit worked mightily through our first Bishop, the late Rt. Rev. Andrew Mbugo Elisa to establish the ELCS some 15 years ago. He developed some thousands of copies of Luther's Small Catechism and the Book of Concord which our congregations are using to date.

Today we are having five (5) Deaneries which includes;

1. Western Equatoria

2. Central and Eastern Equatoria
3. Upper Nile
4. Northern and Nuba Mountains
5. Bhar El Ghazel

In addition, we have about 80 congregations and center all over the South Sudan and Sudan. And the following are pastors serving in our church body:

1. Rev. ELiama Jacob Bisi – Dean Bahr El Ghazel
2. Rev. Nicholas Kumbo Louis – Dean Western Equatoria
3. Rev. Emmanuel Ramadan Bafuka – Dean Northern region and Nuba Mountains
4. Rev. Andrew Bernardo Tingdi – Dean Central and Eastern Equatoria
5. Rev. Simon Gatluak – Dean Upper Nile
6. Rev. Edward Sunge Nzeme – Secretary General
7. Rev. Mariano Joseph Bamuke Yambio
8. Rev. Josepj Otto Ottaviano – Yambio
9. Rev. Matthew Riak – Maiut
10. Rev. John Jock – Malakal
11. Rev. Peter Zigizo – Yambio
12. Rev. Ezra Alisama Ngirimo – Madebe
13. Rev. John Amuch – Malakal
14. Rev. Simon Tor – Malakal
15. Rev. Thomas Gaaniko – Wau
16. Rev. Thomas Nasio – Tombura
17. Rev. Charles Undo – Tombura
18. Rev. Philimisio Yaari – Ezo
19. Rev. Nelson Samuel – Yambio
20. Rev. Jackson Afash – Maridi
21. Rev. Gypson Gyps – Yambio
22. Rev. David Majuang – Malakal
23. Rev. Peter Chol – Juba

24. Rev. Gabriel Mayik – Malakal
25. Rev. Abel Andrew – Nuba Mountain
26. Rev. David Twino – Yambio

In addition we have one candidate for Ordination:

1. Mr. Felix Luka

On the same note we also have one deacon and two deaconesses

1. Mary Stephen – Deaconess Juba
2. Koleta Richard – Deaconess Yambio
3. Alisio Mark – Deacon Baguga

With all these developments, our church has worked hard in order to deliver services to the people of Sudan and South Sudan in general both spiritually and mentally.

Despite the problems we have in South Sudan we have so far achieved the following;

1. Sudan Evangelical Lutheran church joining our church body.

And they already have:

- 5 ordained pastors
- 8 congregations
- 10 evangelists

For our church to expand there is need for the following to be put into consideration and we have the following as our future plans:

1. Organizing further studies for our pastors
2. Organizing training for the evangelists, deacons and deaconesses
3. Investments for the church sustainability.
4. To build a head office and a guest house in Juba for income generation.

We also have to prioritize these future plans, and the following are some of the priorities that we have in place, to help in the maintenance and sustainability of the Lutheran Church congregations in South Sudan

1. Pastoral training
2. Investment like guest house
3. Health Care facilities

We have also encountered some of the challenges in this journey of spreading the gospel to the Sudanese communities. The following are some of the challenges we have gone through and still encounter as we continue with our mission in the Lord's Vineyard.

1. Poor means of transport
2. Economic strains
3. Lack of proper training for evangelists
4. No means to assist the needy in our communities
5. Resettlement of the returnees
6. Illiteracy amongst our people
7. No permanent church structures
8. No permanent lecturers for our pastoral students in Yambio

We also need to appreciate the support we have received from various people, which has enabled the work of evangelism to be successful in Sudan and South Sudan.

1. We appreciate the LHF for their work in Sudan and establishment of the Concordia Bible School in Yambio. The Concordia Lutheran Institute for Holy Ministry (CLIHM) in Khartoum has now been moved to Yambio in Western Equatoria State plus the St. Paul's Lutheran Hospital in Khartoum is now closed.
2. We also appreciate LHF for paying the salaries for pastors and lecturers at the bible school, deacons and deaconesses.
3. We appreciate LCMS who have been instrumental in establishing new congregations in Upper Nile and Nuba Mountains. Even now they have the heart

to continue supporting us like my invitation to attend Nebraska District convention 2012

4. Our sincere appreciation also to LEAF for support of work in Sudan. They bought a car for the church in Juba which the bishop uses up to now and also for building the church in Juba which is an icon of identity for our church in Sudan.
5. We appreciate the LEAF mission organization for sending a missionary to us Mr. Antti Saarenketo who is currently based in Juba and working with our church body. It is also important to appreciate the effort of LEAF in building the missionary house in Juba town hence necessitating the easier stay of the missionaries.
6. We also appreciate the fact that at all times I've used the missionary vehicle in traveling to far of places since it is strong enough to withstand our poor roads.

CONCLUSION

As we are now moving into the time of escalated war with our neighbors the Sudan, we need your support and prayers at this crucial moment in order to engage the leaders in prayers together with Christians around the world for the peace of Christ to be realized in the midst of these tensions in the lives of the Sudanese people. We beseech your kindness to help us provide effective support to communities which are in dire need.

Once more thank you very much for all what you do to our young church in Sudan and South Sudan, and for your prayerful consideration at times of necessity.

Thank you and may God bless you.