



PEACE Comes to South Sudan

RWANDAN PASTORS SHARE THEIR LEARNINGS WITH BROTHERS FROM A NATION PLAGUED BY VIOLENCE

Having walked through their own tragedy, Rwandan church leaders are uniquely positioned to encourage their South Sudanese brothers and sisters.

It was a hallowed moment, although any passerby would perhaps have seen only an ordinary gathering of faith leaders. Twenty-eight bishops and pastors from various churches in South Sudan welcomed visitors from Rwanda, faith leaders coming under the banner of the unified churches of the PEACE Plan in Rwanda. The gathering represented South Sudan's first introduction to the PEACE Plan – a vision for unified, healthy churches empowered to create widespread community change – with the Rwandan Church coming alongside them as their International Partnering Church (IPC).

It was a full circle moment for the Rwandan Church. Over fourteen years ago they welcomed their first church partner visitors from Saddleback Church, as their nation became the birthplace of the PEACE Plan model of church-to-church partnership. Stepping out of the horrors of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi, the Rwandan Church has demonstrated that when local churches are unified, empowered, and equipped to make

a difference the result is widespread transformation. Since the beginning of the PEACE Plan, Rwanda has seen church-based renewal spread across communities as vulnerable people gain access to clean water, orphaned children found loving families, the poor developed skills for saving, children were educated, and the sick received care. Knowing that we are called to bless others with the blessings God has given us, the Rwandan church leaders recently felt God calling them to take their learnings to their African neighbors.



Rev. Dr. Antoine Rutayisire, leader of the team from Rwanda, leads prayer for Bishop Dr. Arkanjello Wani of South Sudan.

Our greatest ministry often comes out of our deepest pain; the Rwandan pastors know that well.

The Rwandan leaders, having walked through their own nation's history of violence, are uniquely positioned to relate to and encourage their South Sudanese brothers and sisters. South Sudan, the world's youngest state, is also one of its most troubled, still experiencing ongoing conflict in the wake of civil war. There is rampant uncertainty about the government peace process and the real threat of day to day violence with church leaders reporting, "Some families have more guns than they have family members."

Against this backdrop, it is even more remarkable that the PEACE Plan partnership has already united 11 different denominations of South Sudan, including Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal, Reformed, and Pentecostal churches. While the current leadership represents 30 churches, the goal is to help train up 100 healthy churches in Juba over the next 3 years. Healthy church training begins this June as the Rwandan team returns to share the fruit of what God has birthed in their nation.