

WNCC Sudan Plenary Script

Welcome:

Good evening. Tonight, with our minds and hearts, we will journey to a place far away. A place with numerous problems that has been forgotten or ignored in recent history. As conflict racks other places in the world, this country has been overlooked. The world has been silent. Deathly silent. As we take a look at the African nation of Sudan, may we prepare for journey in silence.

One Minute of Silence:

Screen is black.

Reader A: The silence is broken by the cries of the women of Sudan who describe their life during the war.

Slides goes with each statement below.

Put 2 or 3 seconds of silence between each voice.

Voice 1: Lack of education. Nobody goes to school when you are in exile.

Voice 2: Lack of hospitals and health care for women.

Voice 3: We lost our property and our assets.

Voice 4: We experienced rape, sexual violence and abuse of our women and girls.

Voice 1: Famine and hunger followed us.

Voice 2: We were hopeless. At times idle.

Voice 3: There was so much loss of life.

Voice 4: We were forced to labor and cook for soldiers.

Voice 1: Disease and HIV/AIDS spread .

Voice 2: Some of us were forced to marry.

Voice 3: Our families were uprooted and separated.

Voice 4: Where was the gospel of Christ?

Slides illustrating the dialogue throughout the rest of the plenary will go on the screen as prompted.

Reader A: While there seems to be so much despair, the people of Sudan are people of dignity. Writer Linda Beher recalls the story of one woman in our text. "The people not only love their land and hold hope for Sudan, hut they are exhibiting leadership by maintaining a life of dignity. To illustrate an example of this kind of leadership hear the story of 70 yr. old Haja Nasra.

Reader B: When the government in her Darfur town confiscated her donkey to use in a security detail, she was "fearless, aggressive, and a powerful fighter," wrote Muhammad, who witnessed Haja Nasra's confrontation of the town Sheikh, or judge. Like the woman of Jesus'

parable who argued for justice until the judge gave in "so she may not wear me out," Haja Nasra prevailed. She presented herself as a woman whose donkey was the only means by which she could provide water to her large family. The Sheikh restored her donkey." May the woman who was fearless and aggressive in her right to dignity and life be an example for us all.

Reader A: The issues of Sudan are complex. Relief agencies, including the United Methodist Committee on Relief, urge the denomination not to use the term, "genocide" because it closes doors on dialogue and puts relief workers in danger. Activists and the General Conference of the denomination who are also concerned about what's happening in Darfur and other regions of Sudan feel that using these words brings a sense of urgency and truth to the situation. As Christians, we need to educate ourselves, listen to all sides, and prayerfully respond.

Reader B: For decades, Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan have been locked in conflict resulting in civil wars, economic chaos, distrust among the people and more. 70 percent of Sudan is Muslim. They live primarily in the northern part of Sudan and many are Arabic. The north is primarily desert devoid of abundant natural resources. The people of southern Sudan are darker-skinned Africans who are Christian or practice indigenous religions. This area is rich in resources, oil and agriculture. So, you can begin to gain a general understanding of why there is on-going conflict.

Reader A: Many words have been used in describing Sudan. Here are some of them.

Voice 1: War Crimes. Grave breaches of the Geneva Convention of August 1949. These include: Willful killing; Torture or inhumane treatment including biological experiments; Willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health; Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly; Compelling a prisoner of war or other protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile power; Intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities.

Voice 2: Crimes Against Humanity. "Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against civilian populations, before or during war..."

Voice 3: Genocide. Any act "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group..."

Voice 4: Ethnic Cleansing. "Purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas..."

Reader A: No matter what words are used, the situation is dire. In March two of our very own, Martha Phillips and Mark Barden, traveled to Sudan to immerse themselves in the culture and gain an understanding of what our sisters and brothers endure daily. Little did they know just how immersed they would be in experiencing the conflict.

Martha and Mark talk about:

- **Uncertainty of even going into Sudan and when we found out we were actually going.**
- **Show Yei on a map and describe the town.**
- **Daily hardships the people endure (ie. Women in Pisak)**
- **Mention Lord's Resistance Army and Congo Camp and the danger**
- **Give background of the shooting incident**
- **Describe the shooting incident and its resolution.**

Reader B: We all can't visit Sudan as Martha and Mark did, but we must urge United Methodists, to pray, to gather in study groups to learn about the degrading effects that war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide have on the victims, the perpetrators and on those who silently stand by. Then we must make our own informed decisions about what is happening in Sudan. Let us join together in the Confession of Responsibility.

Confession of Responsibility:

(In Unison)

God of all the children, we stand humbly before you, fearful of the ongoing violence in this world. We know that often we view situations through a lens of hopelessness. We forget children who know only of fear and war. We stand in apathy, because conflicts are not in our own back yard. We forget the systems we've created that cause others to suffer, so that we can live better. We don't remember that each child of yours is a brother or sister to us. We confess that as Christians we too have responded to religious and ethnic differences out of fear, ignorance and even hatred. We have too quickly resorted to violence as a means of resolving conflicts. We don't realize that the rising tide of violence in the world threatens to engulf communities, nations, and world civilizations. Help us to understand. Forgive us for times of inaction and silence. Guide us as a church and as Christians to become proactive in resolving conflict nonviolently and in working for justice proactively. Lead us and push us to develop alternatives to violence. Help us to be faithful to you in all our responses. Amen.

Reader A: How? How Can We Respond?

Reader B: In 2006 the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) made a statement that as Christians, we do have a responsibility to protect others who are victims of senseless violence. The statement said: "States can no longer hide behind the pretext of sovereignty to perpetrate human rights violations against their citizens and live in total impunity... the responsibility to protect and serve the welfare of its people is central to a state's sovereignty. When there is failure to carry out that responsibility, whether by neglect, lack of capacity, or direct assaults on the population, the international community has the duty to assist peoples and states, and in extreme situations, to intervene in the internal affairs of the state in the interests and safety of the people."

So, as followers of the Prince of Peace, what role can we as Christians take?

Voice 3: First, we can work to ensure that human interests are always more important than economic interests. We can begin with divestments in Darfur. According to the United Methodist Book of Resolutions, "decades of negligence and marginalization by both the former colonial powers and the Sudanese Government were major causes for the rebellion. Over the course of the 20th century, colonial and independence governments in Khartoum (the Capital of Sudan) devoted few resources to developing the human potential of Darfur. There were limited investments in infrastructure, schooling, and economic activity." In addition, since most residents were either involved with raising livestock or in low-productivity agriculture, recent droughts and the advancing desert exacerbated tensions over access to water and fertile land, crucial causes for the rebellion.

Voice 4: The second thing we can do is continue to support the work of United Methodist Committee on Relief, United Methodist Women, the General Board of Global Ministries, and the denomination as a whole, as we continue to be a witness to Christ. United Methodist Women have been involved for years on writing resolutions and setting policies in the denomination for ending conflict in Sudan. In South Darfur, UMCOR is developing educational programs, agricultural programs, water and sanitation programs, and school reconstruction. Martha and Mark witnessed first-hand how UMCOR is touching lives in South Sudan in the area around Yei.

Martha and Mark talk about

- **UMCOR projects**
- **School at Yei**
- **Yei UMC**
- **Talk about faith in their lives and their witness.**
- **Close by singing, "Shukuru"**

Reader A: What is stopping you from learning and speaking out about Sudan? Take a minute, close your eyes, and think quietly about your own personal roadblocks that stop you from acting on behalf of women and children in Sudan... Is it your own busyness? Is it your own feelings of hopelessness for the region? Do you feel the situation is too remote? Do you feel numb to the excessive reporting?

Now, Stop. Lift it up to God. Let it Go. And ask for God's help.

Reader B: Micah 4:1-5 (NRSV)

In days to come

the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established as the highest of the mountains,

and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it,

and many nations shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways

and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go
forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between
many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their
swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword
against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.
For all the peoples walk,
each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD
our God
for ever and ever.

Drum begins beating in African rhythm as all the readers and voices come on stage.

All people on stage say in unison: The Christian Community will not be silent any longer! We will create a groundswell of education, support, and activism. **Chant: No more silence! No more silence! No more silence!**

Reader A: Join us in making a commitment together.

ALL: No More Silence! No More Silence! No More Silence!

Commitment:

(In Unison)

God, we see your face in the images, in the war, and in the beauty of Sudan. Help us to keep those images in our hearts and mind. Together, we commit to you,

- **We will not lose hope!**
- **We will promote democracy!**
- **We will push for peace efforts proactively, and in the years to come.**
- **We will urge the world to protect civilians and we will stand watch to make sure they are safe.**
- **We will demand accountability of our leaders, our investors, and all involved in Sudan.**

Reader B: Go in Peace! Go with a voice! Go in action! Go in the Light of God! Amen.

Participants go down center aisle as everyone sings:

“We Are Marching in the Light of God” FWS, 2235b