

The Beauty and Courage of Sudan: Why a Dream of Peace Is Possible 2009-2010 Mission Study

For most of the past twenty years the country of Sudan has been plagued with severe drought. Desertification is apparent in the west, where thorn bushes dominate the savanna landscape of South Darfur and are killing out the native acacia trees. The shortages of food due to drought have sometimes reached famine proportions. Climate change in Sudan is not just a looming crisis; it is the reality on the ground. And then there are the wars of Sudan: unremitting, for nearly all its history.

Yet at Sudan's core is beauty. Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski captured it well: "More than anything one is struck by the light." Aside from the landscape's beauty, there is an interior beauty: The spirit of courage. A richness of tradition, antiquity, cultures, and natural resources. Human interchange and endurance in all its mystery. The Mission Study for 2009-2010, **The Beauty and Courage of Sudan: Why a Dream of Peace Is Possible**, written by Linda Beher, with study guide by Maxine West, offers an extended portrait of Sudan. Explored are an overview of history that began in Bible times; the country's main ethnicities, religions and languages; touch points and possible causes for the wars; the way Sudanese women are contributing to the peace process and to the culture as a whole; a critique of the severe impact of colonialism and current challenges; and some ways in which people of faith can embrace and affirm the Sudanese people. Sudan is "other" in ways that disconcert Westerners who struggle to understand. The theologian Sally McFague encouraged us to view differences with others with a "loving eye" rather than the "arrogant eye" sometimes brought to such discourse. Using our loving eye in this study, we can see that Sudan and its people embody and inspire many of the issues of the 21st Century continent of Africa. Their beauty and courage promise the hope that eventually they will realize the dream of peace.