



MISSION CONNECTIONS

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Reconciliation

Sharon Kandel

*Mission co-worker
serving in the Horn of
Africa*

Dear friends,

Reconciliation. The *Oxford Dictionary* tells us that reconciliation is "... the restoration of friendly relations". The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines reconciliation as "... the act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement". The Greek word translated as "reconciliation" literally means to **change completely**.

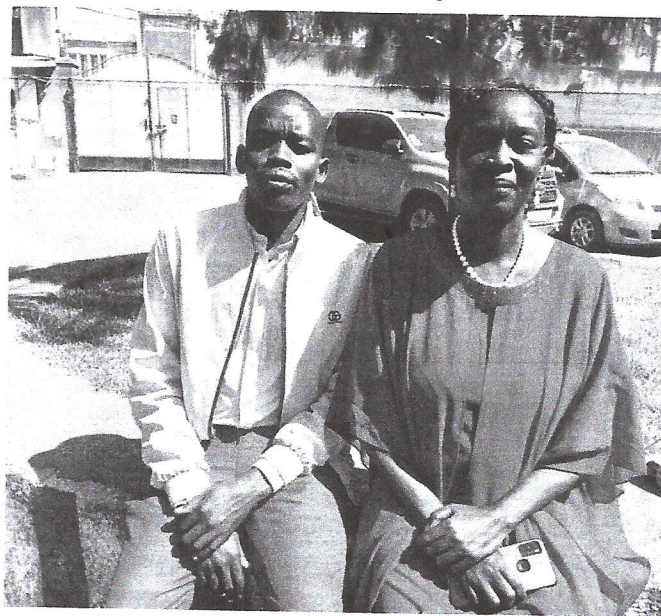
Reconciliation is important in our world today. We seem to have gotten to a point where we cannot get along about anything anymore. In the U.S.A., we have become polarized over politics, sports, mask-wearing or even what I used to think of as common courtesies such as greetings, holding open doors or helping each other. We are resorting to violence instead of taking the time to listen to each other. With technology the way it is, it is so easy to write a quick comment, post a video, or state an opinion as a fact and everyone sees it. People may not know each other but they respond, sometimes with hate without knowing the full story. We jump easily towards hate and intolerance of each other.

In the places where I work, Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan, there is a lot of violence, false rumors and hate for those who are "different." Political violence is everywhere. It has been going on for generations and will take generations to move beyond. What is there to be done? In South Sudan, the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC) felt that it was important to start addressing this as best they could. They sent several people to Rwanda to get training in the "Healing Hearts, Transforming Nations" program that was developed after the

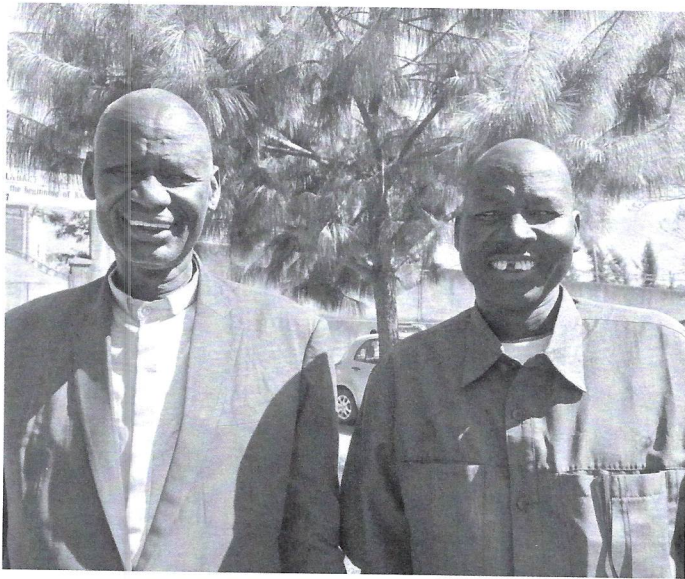
genocide in Rwanda. This program addresses both personal forgiveness and the ability to forgive others. SSPEC has been holding workshops in many places in South Sudan. These workshops address ethnic conflict as well as conflict within a family, community and church. It is exciting to see this work moving forward and to hear of the impact it has on communities.

What makes this even more exciting, from my viewpoint, is how this is spreading. Members of the East and West Gambella Bethel synods in Ethiopia came to South Sudan to teach about a totally different program but when they heard about this program they began to ask asked a lot of questions. The main question was how they could get the same training.

One of the high points of the work I do is connecting people. I was able to connect the Ethiopians with the same school in Rwanda and four of them were able to go to this school for the training. A blessing to their going when they did is that Kristi Rice, a co-worker in South Sudan who is trained in this program, was a part of the leadership team for their time in Rwanda. Some of these Ethiopian Christians had met Kristi before and it made going to a new place just a little easier.



Participants in Rwanda Training: Rev. Olora Olweri and Mrs. Ariet Phillips



Participants in Rwanda Training: Rev. Matthew Doleak and Rev. Deng Jock

It also helped to strengthen the relationship between South Sudan and Ethiopia.

When these four returned from Rwanda, I made sure to be in Ethiopia so that I could hear about their time and how the training went. I sat with all four together and then had time with some of them separately. What a blessing to hear about their experiences. They were so excited to hear from people who really understood ethnic differences and how hard it is to overcome years of ethnic hurt. It also impacted them personally as one of them said, "I now need to go and ask my wife for forgiveness." Not what I was expecting as I know this man to be a Godly man, but he said that he realizes now that he has never really given her what she needed. He felt he needed to make things right at home before he could take this training to others. Reconciliation in the family!

In South Sudan, we also have a partnership with RECONCILE Int. This is a school and program that works with communities across South Sudan

working to reconcile the people in those communities. This means being asked to come because they acknowledge that they have a problem, they want it to stop, and they need help finding a way forward. Once asked to go, they go and listen to everyone, elders, women, youth, police, village chiefs and government people. At the end of the time, if they are in agreement on the way forward, a contract is signed by representatives of all those groups of people. Follow-up is done months later, encouragement is given or changes are made.

Both of these reconciliation efforts are making a difference at the grassroots level. It will take years of work on the part of each person, but change can happen if it happens first with the heart. As long as people want something better for more than just themselves, then there is hope for peace.

Maybe this is what we need to be doing here in the U.S.A. More reconciliation and not so much feeling we have to be the one who is right. We will not always agree with each other, but I do believe that we can learn to live with each other, in peace. Please pray for these reconciliation efforts in Ethiopia and South Sudan. Two countries that have had a conflict, of one sort or another, for way too many years.

Pray for those who have had the training in this program and in the Trauma Healing program that they will have the strength and wisdom to be able to continue this work. It is not something that you go to a community and do once but rather needs to be done over and over again.

Thank you, for your prayers for me, the Horn of Africa and the world. Without your prayers, I have no doubt that I would not be able to do this work. I learn so much about myself as I listen to those in Africa, and I am blessed to have that opportunity.

Sharon Kandel

Thank you for reading my letter!

Please consider supporting Presbyterian Mission through my ministry. I am grateful for your prayers, personal communication and financial support.

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