

MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF PEACE



SHAPING PEACE TOGETHER

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PROCMURA' focus on peace principally rests on its vision of an African continent that will develop holistically in terms of spiritual and physical development based on its stated belief that peace and development are twins and none can exist without the other. As a result of this, PROCMURA has in the past few years marked the International Day of Peace which was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly, and observed around the world each year on 21st September.

The marking of this year's International Week of Peace, which culminated in the celebrations of the Peace Day, with the theme 'SHAPING PEACE TOGETHER' was perhaps like none other. For PROCMURA, like everyone else, it was like none other because it had an added focus on the COVID - 19 pandemic which has created so much pain and uncertainty for humanity, that peace in its wholeness (Shalom in Judaism and Christianity and Salaam in Islam) is greatly disturbed.

PROCMURA, joined the rest of the world in commemorating the International Week of Peace under its own created sub-theme: "THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN PEACE BUILDING". Peace building, it needs to be emphasised, requires the commitment and courage of everyone to work tirelessly to ensure that violence is overcome by a commitment to peace and the wellbeing of society. PROCMURA recognises that Religion and religious leaders in Africa, are core to achieving peace and thus continues to work tirelessly within its programmatic focus of conflict prevention, peace building and reconciliation. It does so in collaboration with all others who share in this objective within Africa and drawing inspiration support of people and organisations around the world who are also committed to the course of peace.

Standing together with the rest of the world so as to ensure that we do it together, PROCMURA's Central office with its stakeholders and constituencies around Africa, marked the peace week by embarking on awareness raising on the importance of peace in the society. This was done through prayers and action. Peaceful processions (peace walk), sharing meals and providing humanitarian assistance to displaced persons affected by conflict formed part of practical actions that were carried out in some selected countries within the PROCMURA focus of work.

Nigeria, Liberia and South Sudan as Focus Countries for marking the Peace Week.

Having carried out a general analysis of its constituencies and within the constraints that COVID -19 places on movement of people and numbers that are allowed to gather at any given time PROCMURA selected Nigeria, Liberia and South Sudan as countries to mark the Peace Week.

NIGERIA

The PROCMURA Nigeria North Area committee, marked the week with visits to communities and persons who are affected by violent conflict in southern Kaduna. They reached out to people in the communities and the internally displaced people living in camps. The Area committee members under the leadership of Venerable Joshua Maalam and Reverend John Shettima Area Adviser and Associate Adviser respectively, invited a cross section of religious leaders from the affected communities and together they visited different villages and camps that had been affected by violence over the past weeks. They donated food items, bags of cement to help reinforce the temporal huts the displaced persons live in. Medical attention was given to sick persons and those traumatised by the violence they faced. Some of the areas visited included Zonkwa the capital of Zango Kataf local government, Zikpa village, kajuru orphanage, and a children camp at Mararaban kajuru. Special appreciation goes to the Methodist Church in Britain for supporting the Nigeria intervention.

Photos from Nigeria



The Area Adviser Venerable Joshua Maalam and Associate Area Adviser Rev John Shettima with other Area committee members in Kaduna.



Women and Children from Zikpa village In Zonkwa receive donations from the PROCMURA committee.



Youth receiving Bags of Cement to assist in construction of their demolished houses

SOUTH SUDAN

The PROCMURA Area Committee in South Sudan Led by the Area Adviser Reverend James Bol from the Presybeterian Church of South Sudan and Rev Mark Akec the chairperson of the PROCMURA Area Committee in South Sudan (PACSS) brought together religious leaders to celebrate and mark the international Day of peace at the Internally Displaced Camps(IDP)

The prayers were in memory of the victims of war and conflict around the world and specifically South Sudan as one of the nations most affected by violent conflicts ,Rev James Bol reminded everyone of the biblical passage that says “Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). He said that “everyone loves peace, but not anybody makes peace”, he explained that. “Jesus did not say blessed are peace lovers, but peace makers”, The religious leaders called on both Christian and Muslim leaders in Africa to make peace in the world and ensure that they are ‘Shaping Peace Together’. Rev. Bol informed the congregation that even if Muslims were a minority in the camp or in South Sudan, Christians should not ignore them. The two faith must work together for peace. The participants during the prayers included PoC’s pastors, evangelists, and youth leaders who are students at Nile theological College (NTC).

The choice of the place for the marking the peace event is that since 2013 when conflict erupted in South Sudan, the Protection of Civilians (PoC) remained under lock down from inhabitants who are not from the area. Church leaders and government authorities, including some ethnic groups were completely banned by the internally displaced peoples (IDPs) from coming to the site. The displaced persons were so traumatised by the war that they and considered those living outside the camp as pro-government, and therefore their enemies. No head of any church or government official is allowed to visit the camp, or even pass near the site without being attacked by stoning or smashing their vehicles. The IDPs only allowed humanitarian vehicles and staff to come to the camp.

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The PROCMURA Area Committee had break through when they reached out to the Camp Management Committee (CMC) to discuss the purpose of the gathering and were granted access to the camp. The CMC's response was encouraging the Area Committee braved themselves and took the risk of being attacked with the objective of holding peaceful prayers for the IDP's. Mr Matthew, the chairman of the camp, appreciated Procmura's bold decision to visit them in the camp for peace purpose, and also to correct prejudices fabricated by enemies of peace in the town against the IDPs. The IDP camps are overcrowded with three campsites. Inside the POC site. Camp 1 had 7,515 people and camp 3 accommodates 24,598 individuals . The prayer session was conducted in camp 3. The prayers were conducted successfully with the IDP's filled with relief gratitude and hope that the religious leaders shared a meal with them after the prayers for peace session was concluded.

Achievement: It was encouraging and fulfilling to see that the session ended up with the two rival groups in the camp of the Nuer and Dinka ethnic groups pledging to coexist and committed to live peacefully with one another in the camp alongside other ethnic groups.

Photos from South Sudan



Prayer Session held in camp 3 of the IDP camps



South Sudan Area Adviser Rev. James Bol and IDP women

LIBERIA

The PROCMURA Area Committee in Liberia(LAC) , brought together Christians at the Three Brothers Ministry, a local Church on the Benson Street, Monrovia, where a service and prayers for peace in the country were offered together to Mark the International Day of Peace on Friday 25th of September 2020. The PROCMURA Area Committee in Liberia alongside other Christians then visited the 72nd Mosque and joined Muslims to pray for Peace. Sheikh Omaru Kamara, a national Cleric of the Muslim Community received the delegation and expressed the need for Christians and Muslims to continuously work together to promote peace.

The Area Committee also conducted a Peace Walk in the city and carried out Radio outreach programs and prayers for Peace in Totota, Bong County in the Central part and Gbarpolu County in the western part of the country. Totota has experienced different forms of violence between Christians and Muslim, youth and ethnic and land conflict over the past .

Photos from Liberia



Prayers for peace conducted by the PROCMURA Area Committee at the 72nd Mosque

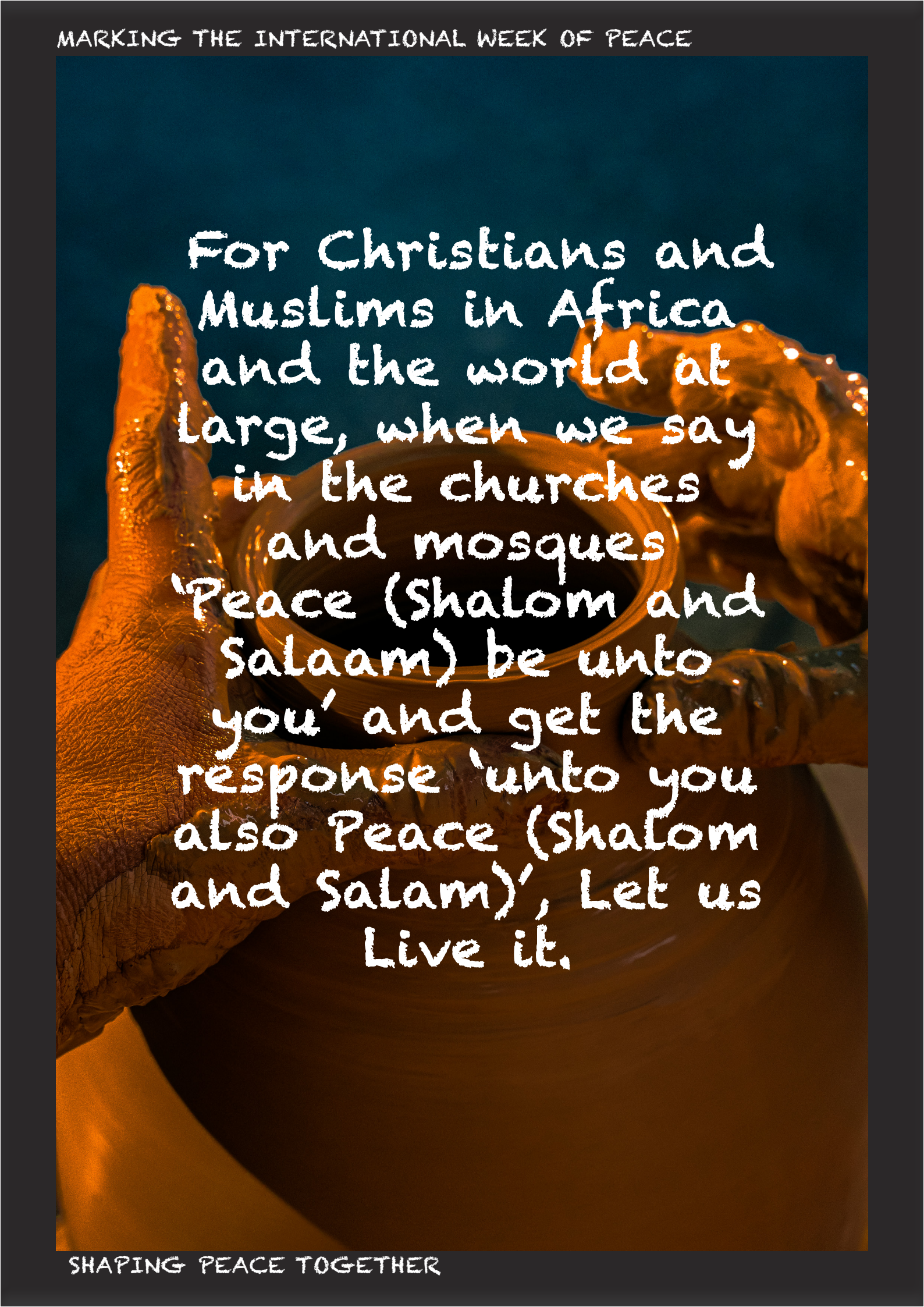
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Service at the Three Brothers Ministry Church Benson street, Monrovia.

Conclusion

PROCMURA' continues with its quest for peace in Africa. It continues to bring religious leaders across its constituencies in peacebuilding efforts and encourage them to think differently and invest more in peacebuilding to put an end to the cycle of violence. PROCMURA recognises that Peacebuilding is a long-term process of encouraging people to talk, mend and repair their relationships with one another , it calls on everyone to be on board in order to achieve positive change.



For Christians and Muslims in Africa and the world at large, when we say in the churches and mosques 'Peace (Shalom and Salaam) be unto you' and get the response 'unto you also Peace (Shalom and Salam)', Let us Live it.