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Hard Pressed but Not Crushed: Peace has found a stool to sit on A Story of Transformation



by **David Tyokighir**
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"Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 4:1,7-9 NIV

Why is there so much evil and injustice around the world? Do people who do evil really find satisfaction when their actions bring pain to known and unknown persons far and near? We give thanks to God that there is healing, peace, and justice through the accomplished work of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose birth Christians worldwide will be celebrating on December 25. In response to this truth and God's call upon us, World Renew continues to holistically empower the poor and vulnerable; facilitate healing for the broken-hearted; promote justice, peace, and reconciliation; support healthy living; help disaster survivors and communities; and improve food security. We do this all as we await a new heaven and a new earth, a time when, as it says in Revelation 21, God will dwell with His people and wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will pass away.

Wukari Peacebuilding Consultation

Terrorism and extremists have in the past decade fueled Christian and Muslim conflict in Nigeria, a country of over 180 million with great potential to impact all of Africa and beyond. This worrisome development is undermining meaningful spiritual, economic, agricultural, social, educational, and political development. Hatred and animosity have resulted in destruction of property, massive displacement of people from



their homes, and killing. The Wukari peacebuilding consultation is an effort aimed at restoring peace in one of the several places in Nigeria in urgent need of sustainable peace following violence due to terror and extremism.

In September of this year, the second Wukari peacebuilding consultation was successfully held in Makurdi. The consultation was attended by Christian and Muslim religious leaders, as well as traditional, political, and local government officials, with the aim of transforming four years of bloody and destructive conflict in Wukari and its environs into a lasting peace.

Participants acknowledged the value of peace and the dangers of violence and stated that "no one will build peace for us. We must own the process for ourselves, our children, and grandchildren to know real peace." A prominent religious leader said, "I am filled with joy to be here. Peace has found a stool to sit on. Our prayer is that everyone here will leave with a gift to take home to give to our people." Another participant who was shot in the stomach during the Wukari conflict four years ago said "I said and did things in anger and pain that I am now sorry for. Now I must forgive and work for peace."

We thank God for the support of this event by CRCNA agencies World Renew, Resonate Global Mission, and the Office of Social Justice; an individual donor in North America; and Hizkias Assefa, who was our facilitator.

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The peacebuilding consultation produced this agreement on important steps forward for sustainable peace in Wukari and its environs:

- Christian and Muslim representatives at the consultation agreed to advocate for a political power-sharing arrangement that fairly represents all religions in the Wukari area, noting that this would take time and education but is very necessary.
- The Muslim Council and the Christian Association representatives in Wukari would initiate a joint effort to end inflammatory preaching in mosques and churches and to identify and resist outside preachers who come to incite and divide.
- Traditional leaders, as well as representatives of both the Muslim Council and the Christian Association representatives in Wukari, would build a mechanism to encourage the return of persons displaced by the conflicts and, as much as is practical, assist them to rebuild destroyed properties and ensure their safety.

Orphan Care and Economic Empowerment for Widows

Following years of terrorist attacks and violent communal clashes in northern Nigeria, thousands of children have been orphaned and many women widowed. Many have also been internally displaced and are living in difficult conditions. In partnership with African Widow and Orphan Support (AWOS) and River Terrace Church in Lansing, Michigan, World Renew is reaching needy orphans in target communities. In the past six months, beneficiary orphans have received school fees support under the supervision of trained caregivers and the management of community and women's fellowship leaders. Caregivers received training to support orphans in the areas of psycho-social care, healthcare, nutrition, legal protection, housing, and clothing.

Lydia from the local government area of Damaturu in Yobe State testifies of God's faithfulness in using the trauma healing and economic empowerment programs to enrich her life and the lives of her four children after her husband was killed in a

terrorist attack in 2014. After participating in these AWOS-supported programs, Lydia received a start-up grant of ₦15,000 (about \$41), which she used to start a fish-selling business.

Lydia is now a successful smoked fish merchant. She remembers the cruel killing of her husband and others in 2014 in Damaturu and prays for the salvation of those behind the incident. She remembers her children having to leave school after their father's death and is thankful to God that the profit she makes from her business allows her to send her children to school again. She remembers days without food, but now thanks God for daily provision of good food for the family. She remembers past days when she could not sleep well at night, but is now thankful to God for trauma healing and the gift of good sleep. Lydia serves as a mentor to other women in her community. With tears of joy, she expresses appreciation to God and those behind this ministry.



Prayers for Nigeria

Praise Items

- Thank God for the generous support of churches, organizations, and individuals that allow World Renew to empower the poor in the name of Christ.
- Thank God for successful visits by World Renew staff to supporting churches, schools and individual donors in the US in October 2017.
- Thank God for the successful Wukari peacebuilding consultation held in September 2017.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for reduced terror and improved peace around the world. Pray that the Wukari peacebuilding consultation and other peace efforts in Nigeria will yield desired results.
- Pray for good governance by leaders in public office in Nigeria.
- Pray for the universal church to continue to glorify God in the midst of persecutions and other challenges hindering spiritual growth and community development.

Personal Update

Connections Tour

Thank you to all supporting churches and individuals who warmly welcomed and provided opportunities for David to share face-to-face during October visits. Your great hospitality and generous gifts to World Renew are appreciated and valued. Your gifts enable World Renew to continue to minister to those in need.



Leading Children's Sermon

Thank You and Merry Christmas

We seize this opportunity to thank all our esteemed supporters and wish everyone Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year ahead.

Blessings,
David Tyokighir