

Chapter 11: The church

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD ARTICLE 14: *Freedom of thought, conscience and religion*



11: The Church

ARTICLE 14 *Freedom of thought, conscience and religion*

BUKALA, 6 YEARS OLD SAYS:

“ I open my eyes after having slept well all night. Mmm, there is a special smell. Mum is ironing our Sunday clothes. We are going to church today.

I see that our neighbours are also getting dressed and making themselves look nice and tidy. There is something special about Sunday and there will probably be many people at church today.

Last Sunday we had a competition between men and women. We competed about which group could collect the most money for the Christmas-party we are going to have in our church. We'll have the competition today again and then the money we collect will be added to the money we collected last Sunday. It is going to be a lot of fun. I hope the women win.

- “Are you coming, Bukala”, Poni shouts.
- “Let's go in advance”, says Poni.
- “Yes, let's.”
- “Mum! I'm going to church with Poni”.
- “Yes, please do”, Mum says. “See you there! But wait! Poni, why don't you ask your big sister Lillibeth to go with you? I could have asked Taban, but he is not quite ready yet.”

Lillibeth was ready, so she came with us. When we arrived at church, they had already started. They were singing the first hymn. It was Moru-hymn number 18. Now my family is arriving as well. Nami and Taban stayed outside church under the big tree. That's where the

Sunday school takes place. Nami likes Sunday-school a lot. I usually go there as well, but today I wanted to be inside in the church, because the collection-competition is happening.

Today we hear the bible-story about the good shepherd. Think! How fantastic that God cares about us so much that he will always come and look for us if we run away from him. I wonder when that could happen for me. I don't want to run away from God – I always want to be near him.

Now the time has come – the collection-competition! Poni's uncle Isac goes to the front of the church and holds up the basket where all the women will put their money and next to him is a woman that I don't know. She holds the basket where the men are to put their money. Now many men and women go up to the front and put money in the baskets. It is so exciting!

Now they count the money – I wonder who the winner is! No, no, the men collected the most money, we



women lost. I ask Isac if we can't do it once again. Please! – Yes, says Isac. Let's ask the men if we can do it once again and then we will see if the women can collect more money than the men. The men accept. Now we go up to the front once again and leave some more money. Now I see how Agnes, Poni's mum puts money in the men's basket. I wonder why she did that. Does she not want the women to win? Then Poni gets crossed with her mum.

- “Why do you put money in the men's basket?” Poni says. “Then we might not win!”

- “But please, Poni”, says Agnes. “It is only a game, don't take it so seriously. The main thing is that we get lots of money for our Christmas-party.”

Agnes is actually right. It is good if we get lots of money for our Christmas-party. So it doesn't matter who wins the competition.



THE CHURCH

Many churches are built of clay and straw and without doors. During recent years Lui diocese has received support so that many parishes have been able to build churches of bricks with tin roofs. Lui cathedral is built of burned bricks and has a tin roof. A future dream is that all churches should be built of burned bricks, so that the termites don't destroy them.

In most churches there is an altar and in some also a pulpit or a lectern. In Lui cathedral there is a baptismal font in the back of the church, by the entrance. The parish members sit on benches made of wood or clay. The church is often decorated with Christmas-decorations and paper-flowers, the same way that we use flowers to decorate our churches.

WORSHIP

Services can start different times on Sundays. There can also be two services the same day, for instance the first starting at 9.00 o'clock and in English and the second starting at 11.00 o'clock and in Moru language. Most people are poor, but on Sunday you dress up. People usually have only three sets of clothes, one for Sundays and two

for changing on weekdays, so one outfit is being washed when you wear the other one.

In the service several pastors, deacons, women from Mother's Union and laymen contribute. Waiting for the service to start the congregation sings together. The service starts with a procession, when all the contributors and sometimes also the Sunday-school children walk in the same rhythm and sing. After that follows a hymn, a opening prayer, bible reading, announcements and confession. Before the pastor starts preaching, the children go to Sunday-school, usually held outside under a tree.

After preaching another hymn is sung and then the collection is taken. Baskets plaited of straw are used to collect the money. If communion is celebrated, a communion prayer and the Lord's prayer follow. For the communion biscuits and hibiscus tea are given instead of wafers and wine. People dip the biscuits into the cup of hibiscus tea so that they do not share the cup, for fear of nodding sickness. The service ends with the blessing and a final hymn. After the service all the people including children greet each other by shaking hands. There can be 200 –

250 people at an ordinary service, so there are quite a lot of people to greet.

During the hymns and songs there are instruments played, drums, maracas and other rhythm-instruments and sometimes also flutes. In the music you can find influences from African rhythms, Arabic scales and Anglican hymns. Sometimes the women add their calls of joy and the atmosphere is much noisier than in our services.

INSTRUMENTS

See Facts in chapter 12, *The party*.

BAPTISM

In Lui Diocese baptism is conducted from the age of 12. This is called adult baptism. Those who are to be baptised are trained in groups of 20 – 40 people for 2-3 months and after that they are baptised in the church. There are no celebrations at home, only at church.

CONFIRMATION

Often when the bishop visits the parishes he also holds confirmation. It is only the bishop who does the confirmation in Lui diocese. The age for confirmation varies from the age of 11 to 80. During the confirmation service, the bishop

asks the people who are going to be confirmed: "You are standing here in front of God and this congregation. Will you respect the faith given to you in the baptism? Will you have the faith and show it in action, like your godparents once showed you?"

They answer: "I will." Then by the laying-on of hands, the bishop prays for each of them: "Oh God, protect your child with your heavenly blessing, so that you may live eternally in this child. May (s) he be filled with your holy spirit until you reach your eternity."

FUNERAL

A funeral is of great importance for the people in Lui diocese. Whole villages can be very involved when someone dies. The school in the village can be closed because many of the teachers will attend the funeral. The funeral often takes place at home and you are buried on your own piece of land. Important people in the diocese or the parish can be honoured with a tombstone with a picture of the deceased. If the person does not die at home, the procession with the corpse is met by women crying and they follow all the way home. The sound of crying and drums mixes

Facts



and the funeral service can go on for several days.

In the middle of the family yard, tombstones like statues, 4.5 meters (15 ft) high wooden sculptures can be raised. A tomb-stone can also be made of boulders on top of each other. The boulders symbolise how many lions the dead man has killed.

RELIGION

South Sudan has no state religion. The constitution accepts all religions but maintains that state and religion should be kept apart. Most of the inhabitants in the country are Christian or belong to traditional religions with strains of spiritism and ancestry worship. Almost two thirds of the inhabitants in the southern parts of the country practice local traditional religions.

In the 1980s when South Sudan was still part of Sudan, the government made several attempts to initiate Islam in the south. The resistance to Islam from the southerners was a motive to the civil war 1983 – 2005.

There is no mosque in Lui town and no Muslims that are known, but in the neighbour town Mundri there are Muslims. The Seventh-Day Adventists and the Roman Catholics each have a small church in Lui town.



SUGGESTION 1

Conversation

CHILD RIGHTS CONVENTION
Article 14 in the Child rights convention tells about the child's right to freedom of religion.

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Talk with the children about what freedom of religion can mean. Do we as a nation have freedom of religion?

BASIC FEELINGS

Bukala thought it should be great fun with the collection competition. What makes you happy – what do you think is great fun?

Poni got crossed with her mother when she put money in the men's basket. Poni wanted the women to win. Have you got cross when you have been in a competition?



SUGGESTION 2

Prayers

BIBLE WORDS

The good shepherd
(John 10:1-21)

.....
The lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7)

SONGS

God's not dead (no), He is alive
(KS 85)

.....
Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, halleluja
(CJP 67)

.....
Ho ho ho hosanna (KS 109)

.....
It's me, It's me, it's me, O Lord
(CJP 119)

.....
You've got to move when the Spirit says move (CAHON 918)

PRAYER

God, thank you for the church, and for worship that helps us to gain energy or comfort, whatever we need at the time. If we get lost like stray sheep help us find the way back to you again. Amen.



SUGGESTION 3

Make maracas

See Suggestions in chapter 12,
The party.

SUGGESTION 4

Visit a church

Make a study visit to a church. What things can you find? Compare the church here to the church in Lui described in Facts. What are the similarities and what are the differences?



SUGGESTION 5

Arrange a competition

Arrange a competition between two groups (i.e. boys and girls) about what group can collect the most money for a charitable purpose.

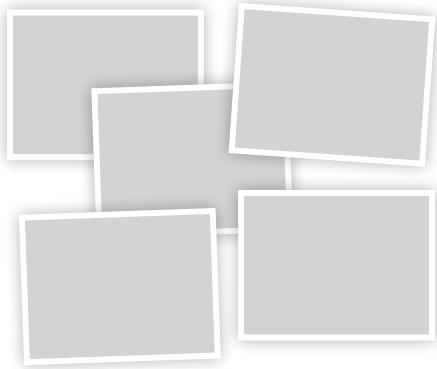
Here is a website that lists lot of different charities that you could support. There's a special section for Christian charities.
www.charitychoice.co.uk

SUGGESTION 6

Arrange worship

Ask someone in your parish if you as a group can participate in planning a service in church.

Resources



PICTURES

Church of burned bricks and tin roof

Church of clay and tin roof

Church, open with straw roof

Old and new church

The cathedral

Inside the cathedral

Inside a church with decorations

Baptismal font

Collection baskets

Maracas

Children dressed up for church

Child dressed up for church

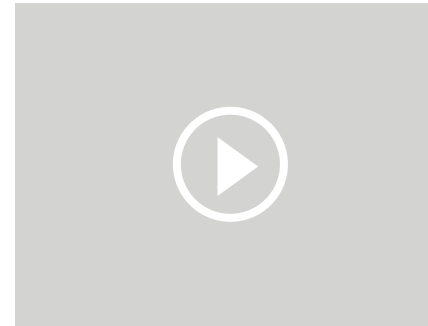
Procession

Sunday school

Sunday school (1)

Greeting after service

Tomb-stone



VIDEO-CLIPS

Moru-hymn 18, song
#1 in Some songs

Sunday school