

Seek & Serve



Episcopal
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Healing a hurting world

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Fighting Hunger in Burundi

Still reeling from the after-effects of a civil war that ended in 2005, Burundi persistently tops the Global Hunger Index, which analyzes the levels of hunger in 120 nations. The situation is so dire that according to one report, 75 percent of the population only

ate one meal a day over a five-month period.

Displacement from the war is a big part of the problem, but Burundi is also plagued by its geography—it has a large population but little arable land—and has suffered prolonged droughts that are exacerbated by climate change.

To solve this ongoing hunger crisis, Episcopal Relief & Development has partnered with the Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi to help farmers dramatically increase their productivity through better agriculture and land-use practices.

This urgent work addresses the full range of challenges confronting farmers in a sustainable way, so that its impact will last for years to come. Our strategy starts with helping farmers to develop high-yield seeds that are adaptable to the unique soil and climate conditions in Burundi. Then farmers are trained in how to harvest seeds from each crop to choose the best varieties, so that their harvest will become self-sustaining.

Episcopal Relief & Development and the Province are teaching farmers about better soil management techniques, such as improving the way they till the earth and how to stop erosion by digging deep trenches at key points along each hillside.

Throughout this process, those trained are also taught



Agricultural program participants learn to grow plants that can survive Burundi's harsh conditions.

how to become trainers themselves, and they are then sent out into the community to pass along what they have learned to others, creating a positive ripple effect.

Related efforts are underway as part of Episcopal Relief & Development's holistic, comprehensive approach to empowering people to improve their lives. These include rehabilitating and installing clean water sources, replanting trees to combat deforestation and erosion, work to combat HIV/AIDS, and the *NetsforLife*® program to stop the spread of malaria. That's because better nutrition, improved health and greater economic opportunity must go hand in hand.

Emmanuel Manigiza can testify to the transformative difference this work is making. A 29-year-old resident of Gifungo in southern Burundi, he supports his disabled grandmother, wife and three children. For

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

Feeding the Body — and the Spirit

The Easter season is upon us – a time to break the fast of Lent and revel in the abundant life which Jesus brings to all of us through his sacrifice.

The symbols of this Easter season speak of God's generous gifts through nourishment. On Easter Sunday, many children hunt for eggs, a tradition from the ancient Christians, symbolizing the rebirth that comes to all of us through Christ's resurrection.

Out of eggs come chickens, which in turn multiply prodigiously to provide both eggs and more chickens to feed people. Hatchery cooperatives are a vital source of income generation and food throughout Episcopal Relief & Development's programs in all parts of the world.

Another symbol of Easter, the lamb, reminds us all of the Passover Lamb who becomes the Lamb of God. John the Baptist proclaims upon seeing Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

It is through Jesus' death and resurrection that our sins are taken away and we are given abundant life.

Extending the abundant life to those who have been denied it for so long is exactly what Episcopal Relief & Development is working to accomplish through our efforts to end hunger and increase food security.

As you'll read in this issue of *Seek & Serve*, we are doing this with our partners in Burundi, the Solomon Islands and Nicaragua, as we empower people at risk of hunger to grow more nutritious food more productively for more income in a more sustainable way, improving their physical health and financial security.

Here at home, Episcopal congregations are doing their part through the Abundant Life Garden Project, an interactive, Scripture-based curriculum enabling children to share the ministry and work of Episcopal Relief & Development. The program provides an early lesson in how we can translate the prayer and thought we have engaged in during Lent into direct action throughout the spring, summer and fall.

In this season of hope, let us rededicate ourselves to fulfilling our Baptismal Covenant by continuing Christ's work to give abundant life. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Yours faithfully,

Robert W. Radtke
President

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many years, he struggled to make ends meet, and his family had constant battles with malaria. "Life was difficult," he said. "Most of the community members ate once a day. Our land was bare and you can hardly get any food to feed the children."



Reforestation efforts are brightening Burundi's landscape.

But then, he became one of the first beneficiaries of our food production project. In addition, he received insecticide-treated nets distributed by *NetsforLife*®, protecting his family from malaria. "It is marvelous how the fortune of my family has turned around," Emmanuel said. "I no longer waste money on [malaria] drugs, but instead I used the money to pay for the children's fees and loan other people money payable with interest. I currently train over 61 people on crop cultivation. The whole village has a different perception of me now. I am grateful to the church and *NetsforLife*® for protecting and providing for my family."

Give Gifts for Life this Mother's Day



Show the mothers in your life how much you care by purchasing a *Gifts for Life* gift in their honor. Your gift will help women around the world reach their potential and provide for their families.

To learn more, visit our website at
www.episcopalrelief.org/giftsforlife

The Power of “We” in the Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands in the South Pacific are like the proverbial canary in a coal mine when it comes to climate change — and its impact on hunger. Already, rising sea levels are contaminating fresh water wells and the soil, sharply reducing the limited land available for agriculture and destroying traditional food sources and farming methods.

In one of the hardest-hit areas — the isolated Ontong Java atoll, which consists of 122 islands arranged around a lagoon 70 kilometers long — the Anglican Church of Melanesia was invited to help the community figure out how to adjust to this threat for their very existence.

Episcopal Relief & Development partnered with the Church to forge a major solution by introducing the permaculture farming technique in 2009. This involves planting fruit and vegetables on raised beds in a unique farm design that replicates natural growth patterns, resulting in self-generation and lower maintenance. In essence, it creates a type of forest on beach sand, making it uniquely suited to the new climate realities on the Solomon Islands.

However, the implementation and success of permaculture was anything but a foregone conclusion. It required extraordinary levels of cooperation among the people of the atoll.



Stilts help protect houses on the Solomon Islands from rising tides.

Women are the traditional landowners there, so the first step involved negotiating with the community's matriarchs to allocate plots of land for the permaculture experiment. The next step was to obtain the approval of the male elders who make up the Council of Chiefs. Only after they granted permission



Three of the project's lead farmers display the plants growing in their nursery.

for the project to be tested on their atoll could the island's farmers examine the farm design and agree to introduce the new technique.

Despite the changes involved, permaculture has been embraced by all of the stakeholders. And the results speak for themselves: though the farms are located just 10 meters from the sea, harvests have been abundant. Data from the program suggest that household monthly expenses for food have dropped nearly 75 percent. Significantly, the community's youth, who make up the vast majority of the population, are now much less inclined to move to the urban areas looking for employment opportunities (which are basically nonexistent) due to the increased harvests and to the wider diversity of crops now being produced.

Permaculture's success is even generating attention from government authorities. The Ministry of Agriculture has honored the project, and the Ministry of the Environment has visited the atoll and assessed its vulnerabilities to allocate greater resources to the community's needs.

Most recently, permaculture passed the ultimate test — when the Solomon Islands were hit by a tsunami, all the crops in the raised beds survived.

This collaborative effort towards a shared goal has empowered residents to reestablish a sustainable food supply, avoid hunger, prevent displacement, and achieve a new spirit of cooperation.

It All Came From My Own Land

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the challenge of making a real and lasting impact in the fight against hunger. Around the world, there are billions of people that go to bed hungry every night. We must not look away just because there is so much to be done. Instead, we can be fortified by a single story that shows the impact we can each have when we work together.

Episcopal Relief & Development is working with our partners in Nicaragua to help farming families increase and diversify their production. One woman, Mayra, has taken the new skills we have taught her and transformed a small plot of empty land into a bountiful garden brimming with plantain trees, mango trees, citrus trees, maize, cassava, beans, peppers and chickens. She is using the new harvest to improve her family's diet, as well as sell the surplus to neighbors, and she continues to grow the garden to increase her yield even further.

The money saved from not buying food has been used to expand her house, and to open up a small business making lunches for children attending a Saturday program at the local school.



Mayra, shown here in front of her home, is proud of the abundant garden she now tends.

Mayra is incredibly proud of what she has accomplished, and is astounded by the abundance that now surrounds her. "One day I was amazed because I had made chicken soup, and I did not have to buy anything. It all came from my own land and my own work. I will not forget that day."

Mayra's story is replicated throughout Nicaragua and around the world every day, showing that we can make a difference in people's lives, and beat hunger one success story at a time.

More Fun than Recess

Teaching our youth to appreciate the abundance around us, and to care for those without is an important part of our Church's ministry. With that in mind, Episcopal Relief & Development developed the Abundant Life Garden Project, a hands-on curriculum that allows children to experience firsthand the challenge and wonder of growing our own food.

Deemed "more fun than recess" by one enthusiastic fourth grader, the program provides many children with their first opportunity to connect the food they eat with the soil, rain and sun they may have taken for granted. In addition to learning about the tools and conditions required to be a successful gardener, the curriculum digs into Scripture, helping our youth understand their true meaning and apply them to the world we live in. For example, an exploration of the parable of the Good Shepherd who leads his sheep to water can promote a discussion on what it would be like to not have fresh water, a condition that our child might not be able to imagine, but that is all too prevalent around the world.

The program also introduces children to the *Gifts for Life* catalog, helping them understand how that they can share their blessings and abundance with children in need around the world. For more information about the Abundant Life Garden Project and to see our full line-up of Christian formation programs for children, please visit www.episcopalrelief.org/children.



Children have fun while learning about the land at the Episcopal School of Knoxville.

Photo by Kelly Norrell, Communications Director