



A LENTEN MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP

This Lenten season, our thoughts turn to the story at the heart of our faith – Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus was crucified because he taught a radical message: *Love God. Love your neighbor*. It’s a message that lives and sustains us 2,000 years later.

Love was on Jesus’ mind the night before he died. At the Last Supper, he said to his disciples, “A new commandment I give you” – not a new *option*, mind you, but a new *commandment* – “that you love one another.”

I am convinced that love is the key to life. I’m also convinced that the opposite of love is not hate but selfishness, and that hatred is merely a derivative of selfishness. Love, on the other hand, is the cure. And I have no doubt that when it comes to love and unselfishness, you are doing a pretty good job! Your donations to Episcopal Relief & Development are an expression of this unstoppable, all-powerful love.

I have the good fortune of being the honorary chair of Episcopal Relief & Development’s Board of Directors, and I’ve witnessed firsthand the profound impact your contributions have. Over the last year, I have traveled to many of the places impacted by natural disasters during 2017 and 2018. I saw food and water being delivered and medical and pastoral care being provided to folks – from towns to the mountains – thanks to your generosity.

Love allows us to bridge great distances so that children an ocean away are as precious to us as the little ones living right down the block. Because of our

love, we care for them just as we would our closest neighbors. We want them to be healthy and to have opportunities to live a happy and healthy life. That’s what Episcopal Relief & Development’s integrated programs with children are accomplishing in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These programs have already changed the lives of thousands of children and will reach many more this year.

How much more can we do? As much as our love allows. I’ve recently appointed Teri Lawver as Episcopal Relief & Development’s new board chair. She brings faith and commitment to the role. I have no doubt that together with Rob Radtke as president and CEO and the rest of the board and staff – and your continued partnership – we will create lasting positive change in the months ahead.

Jesus’ resurrection made it clear that the way to life is the way of love. Love God. Love your neighbor. And while you’re at it, love yourself! I wish you great joy in the upcoming Easter season.

The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church



PROGRAM: A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN

There's a reason Episcopal Relief & Development has made children's early development a top priority. Research has persuasively shown the critical role that the first 1,000 days play in a child's life. The first three years of a child's life are a unique window of opportunity to shape the cognitive, emotional and social development of a child's brain. When children miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, their future is at risk. And when a whole community's children miss this window, the community's future has less promise than it should.

Episcopal Relief & Development's integrated Early Childhood Development (iECD) program is a powerful intervention that benefits children, families and whole communities. The program empowers caregivers to play a more active role in their children's development – through engagement, stimulation and play. As one community volunteer put it, "In the past, children were just there and left to themselves. Today, we have understood that children need much more than porridge and milk." She added that because of the iECD program, she has seen positive changes in the village's children.

So far, the program has engaged over 6,000 primary caregivers and families in Zambia and Kenya, benefiting nearly 10,000 children under the age of five – and is now expanding to other countries. The benefits have been measurable, significantly improving children's cognitive and motor skills and changing how parents, particularly fathers, connect with their children, promoting deeper, more responsive engagement.

"We have learned that talking to our children is important," one caregiver said. "In the past, we just used to leave children to play on their own. We now tell stories to our children, we sing to them, and we play with them because we understand that before the child goes to Grade 1 – they are supposed to learn."

Another parent noted, "Before, my child was just there with me, but I didn't pay attention to her. Now, I interact differently. I look in her eyes, make faces and sounds, and my baby smiles at me."





COUNTRY: NEW OPPORTUNITY IN MYANMAR

Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia. About a third of the population (15.8 million people) live in poverty, with the majority living in rural areas, where rice farming is a major means of livelihood.

Mg Kyut Yin is a rice farmer. He lives with his wife, their five children and his mother in the small village of Ta Ree Poe Kwe in Kayin State. To supplement their farming income, Yin's wife does day labor, and they raise and sell chickens and goats. Yet despite these efforts, the family has found it hard to make ends meet. The problem lies in the seasonality of rice farming. "In the rainy season, I worked every day in the farm," Yin explained. "After harvest, I did not have a job and had to wait until another rainy season started."

Episcopal Relief & Development and our local partners in Myanmar are helping Mg Kyut Yin and other small-crop farmers maintain their tradition of growing rice while increasing their economic stability.

The Church of the Province of Myanmar recognized that this seasonal pause in production could provide a new opportunity for farmers like Yin to plant something else in the off-season. Church land that wasn't being utilized could be planted with a crop other than rice. The question was: What else might these farmers grow? Trainings took place to guide families in assessing the nutritional and other benefits of particular seasonal crops.

Groundnuts seemed like a particularly good choice, because in addition to being a nutritious food source, they require less water than other crops. They also absorb nitrogen from the air and enrich the soil for the next planting season.



To strengthen the community's resilience, our partners also provided disaster preparedness training. In a region where flooding and mudslides are common, they wanted to equip communities to better manage their response and recovery. To further insulate the families against weather-related hardships, economic programs such as micro-loans or savings programs are being considered for the future.

Yin is already benefiting from the increased work opportunity. "Now we can grow groundnuts and get more income," he says. "Our children can attend school and study. My wife is able to work more hours, and we tithe to our church. It is a great opportunity for us."

A REFLECTION FROM BETSY: A MONTHLY SOURCE OF JOY



For many of the people I talk to, supporting Episcopal Relief & Development is just one way to live out their faith. It's also a source of joy. The joy of making a meaningful difference. The joy of helping children and families reach their God-given potential. I hope that as you support the transformative work we do – around the world and right here at home – you too can see the many fruits of your giving.

There are so many ways to give and have a profound impact. One way you might like to consider is to join our *Sustainers Circle*. The *Sustainers Circle* was formed by a group of dedicated supporters who wanted to contribute on a monthly basis to ensure that Episcopal Relief & Development can respond to urgent needs and stay on as needed.



Betsy Deisroth
Vice President, Advancement



MONTHLY GIVING BENEFITS YOU AND THE PEOPLE

- ✔ It provides a dependable stream of income to support the full range of our work. It ensures that we can respond to disasters with food, water, medicine and shelter and assist with long-term recovery. And it allows us to fight poverty and hunger and promote the well-being of communities around the world.
- ✔ It makes sense for many people, because it's easy to budget and allows you to spread your giving out across the year. And you can revise your commitment at any time.

To learn more about our *Sustainers Circle* and whether it's right for you, please contact us at 1.855.312.4325. Or, if you would like to start giving monthly, simply visit our website at support.episcopalrelief.org/monthly to start your monthly gift.

However you choose to give to Episcopal Relief & Development, may it bring you great joy to know that you are making a difference to so many!