

# Seek & Serve

*Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?*

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Children in Pyay, Myanmar. To protect them from sunburn, thanaka, a fragrant paste made from ground bark, is spread on their cheeks

## New Hope in Myanmar

For four decades, the people of Myanmar suffered under brutal military rule. Not only were their fundamental rights denied, but their once-thriving agricultural sector—Myanmar used to be known as “the rice basket of Asia”—was decimated, as the government took over production and introduced farming techniques that stripped the soil of its nutrients.

Elections in 2010 ended military rule, but the lingering after-effects have kept the country among the world's poorest. Chronic malnutrition remains a serious problem, as does lack of opportunity.

However, the seeds of Myanmar's revitalization can be found in the talents and spirit of its people, its abundant natural resources, its small but vibrant Anglican church and its many other untapped assets.

Because the Church of the Province of Myanmar (CPM) has long served the country, Episcopal Relief & Development was able to work with the Church to serve badly-affected, isolated communities after Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar's coastal regions in 2008. With support from Episcopal Relief & Development, the Church established development offices at the provincial level and in each of its six dioceses. Over the last eight years, these offices have been transitioning from mainly disaster-relief projects to also include longer-term development activities with a focus on agriculture and animal husbandry. And this capacity-building process positioned the Church to greatly expand its efforts when political liberalization started in recent years.

*(Continued on back)*



President's Column:

## Let's Not Hide Our Light Under a Bushel

In 2015, Episcopal Relief & Development celebrates its 75th anniversary. I believe with all of my heart that what we have done over this time, as the collective expression of the faith and generosity of Episcopalians across the United States, stands as a singular achievement of which we should all be enormously proud.

As the words of Matthew 25 note, we have indeed fed the hungry, quenched the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, cared for the sick, visited the prisoner and worked tirelessly to empower “the least of these” to lift themselves up to better lives.

Since 2002 alone, Episcopalians have made more than 800,000 donations and sent in more than \$219 million in gifts, including \$69 million for disaster response and long-term recovery, \$68 million for global needs and \$40 million for malaria and *NetsforLife*<sup>®</sup>. These results mean we are reaching and transforming the lives of three million people in nearly 40 countries each and every year.

We are a small organization in the field of international development. But our impact is mighty, far exceeding the material resources we can bring to the table. That is because of the power of our faith, the generosity of our spirit, the global reach of the Anglican Communion, the wisdom of our methodology and the rigor we bring to measuring results and maximizing positive outcomes.

*NetsforLife*<sup>®</sup> is a perfect example of this. We started with the knowledge that insecticide-treated bed nets could save the lives of many of the more than 600,000 children who die from malaria each year in sub-Saharan Africa. But we didn't just assume that all we had to do was distribute these nets to solve the problem. We tested different approaches, measured the results, re-tested and measured again and eventually crafted a strategy that works by emphasizing local volunteer recruitment, education and community-building efforts to accompany net distribution.

As a result, *NetsforLife*<sup>®</sup> has made a profound difference. To date, we have distributed more than 11.2 million nets in 17 countries, reached more than 32 million people, saved the lives of over 100,000 children under age five and reduced the number of malaria cases by up to 45 percent where we work. And by working through local churches—often the only institutions that exist beyond the end of the road in some of the most remote parts of Africa—we reach people who would otherwise be left behind.

Yet our ultimate impact is far greater than this. Because to date, the *NetsforLife*<sup>®</sup> methodology has been adopted as national policy by five countries, with seven more likely to follow suit in the near future. Other larger development organizations are doing the same. We have created the “best practice” in malaria prevention, and so our small yet mighty organization has indeed changed the world.

And that's just one facet of what we do. As this issue of *Seek & Serve* notes, our asset-based community development model is reducing hunger, malnutrition and poverty in Myanmar, a country that until recently was closed to most development organizations but open to us because of our relationship with the Anglican church there. Whether it's helping Haitians recover after their earthquake, building clean water and sanitation in Central America, providing microloans to women in India or helping farmers in the Philippines bring their food to market, our impact is great indeed.

That's why I often say, “let's not hide our light under a bushel!” Let's proclaim what we have achieved together, let's feel deserved pride in what we are doing and let's re-dedicate ourselves to building upon this foundation so we reach even greater heights in the future.

The story of Episcopal Relief & Development and its predecessor, the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, is a story of prophetic action. By following our Baptismal Covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons, we are truly healing a hurting world.



Yours faithfully,

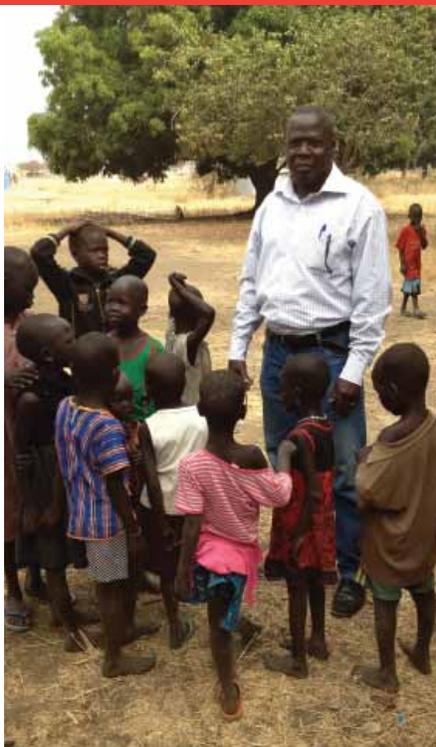
Robert W. Radtke  
President

# Emergency Update: South Sudan

The conflict in South Sudan continues, and months of violence have left an estimated 4.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and forced 1.3 million to flee their homes.

The Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan is one of the troubled region's most robust institutions. Its long-term presence and history of strengthening communities has earned it trust across divisions, enabling the Church to act directly where few others can—both on the ground and at the highest levels.

During this time of crisis, a number of Church properties are serving as makeshift camps for displaced people and distribution points for food aid and other assistance. Meanwhile, its network of health clinics is responding to the overwhelming need for basic care and working to minimize the potential spread of respiratory and waterborne disease in the camps.



SUDRA's Rev. Joseph El Hag with children whose families have been forced to flee their homes.

Episcopal Relief & Development is providing financial and technical assistance to the institution's humanitarian arm, SUDRA. In a three-month period, SUDRA provided food for 70,000 displaced people in hard-hit regions, including a daily meal for 3,000 children in Awerial, cooked and served by volunteers from the local Mothers' Union.

Efforts over the coming months will bring urgently needed food aid to recently displaced people in Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei and Bahr-el-Ghazal states. Although fighting is ongoing, SUDRA will also begin the necessary work of peace-building and reconciliation. By providing trauma counseling and facilitating resettlement in collaboration with the Church's Justice Peace & Reconciliation Commission, they are keeping hope alive for a better, more peaceful future for the people of South Sudan.

## A Neighbor is Anyone in Need

From a young age, Alden Besse knew he led a privileged life. He was aware of his good fortune and of the inequality that was so pervasive in the world around him.

That knowledge guided him in his early years, as he made his way through Harvard and then the Virginia Theological Society. When he was 26, he became a priest. And with each step he remembered, "Some have so much, and some so little."

He has spent the last 70 years trying to help people and causes, whether they are at the nursing home on Martha's Vineyard he visits regularly, or across the globe. In Alden's view, a "neighbor is anyone in need."

And over the years he has been one of Episcopal Relief & Development's most steadfast supporters. In fact, he still has a handwritten ledger that documents his first gift to our organization. The notation reads, "Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief—\$295." The year was 1947.

Since then, the Presiding Bishop's Fund has become Episcopal Relief & Development, and our mission has grown more complex and wide-ranging. But one thing hasn't changed: the Reverend Alden Besse is still helping his neighbors.





## A Look Back in Time

*As Hitler gained power in Europe and the clouds of war gathered, Episcopalians in the U.S. raised funds to provide humanitarian assistance to growing numbers of refugees. These efforts would lead to the founding of the Presiding Bishop's Fund on December 6, 1940. Passed by resolution at the National Council, the move was a direct response to the words of The Most Rev. Henry St. George Tucker, 19th Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church, who called for supporting those suffering as a result of war, "not only as an obligation, but still more as a Christian privilege."*

## New Hope in Myanmar *(Continued from cover)*

Using its asset-based community development model, Episcopal Relief & Development is working to unleash the skills of now-retired but still-brilliant experts in soil and crop management and animal husbandry. With Episcopal Relief & Development's assistance, the Church has called these men and women out of retirement, establishing a demonstration farm and school to transfer their wisdom to the next generation of farmers.

"When I visited this school in February, about 30 students who had come from around the country were sitting in rapt attention under a shed listening to these elderly men and women teach them about how to rotate crops, how to use natural pesticides and fertilizers, how to breed animals," said Episcopal Relief & Development President Robert Radtke. "All knowledge that had been lost ... was now being recovered and passed on. The sense of abundant possibility filled me with deep hope."

Many other exciting projects are underway, too. The CPM's Men's Association is exploring the use of Effective

## 75 Years in Photos

One of the cornerstones of our 75th Anniversary Celebration is a touring exhibition of iconic photos from our programs around the world. This beautiful presentation leads the viewer through a meaningful, intimate exploration of our history and our four core program areas. Collected from five continents, these photographs highlight the faces and stories of Episcopal Relief & Development's 75 years of work. To learn more about the stories behind these powerful images, as well as a schedule of the exhibition's stops across the country, please visit [www.episcopalrelief.org/75exhibition](http://www.episcopalrelief.org/75exhibition). To find out more about our 75 weeks of celebration visit [www.episcopalrelief.org/75](http://www.episcopalrelief.org/75).



Microorganism technology to make organic fertilizers and boost crop yield while minimizing the environmental impact. The Mothers' Union has initiated a micro-finance program offering credit to women to establish their own small businesses and cottage industries, while also providing vocational training in animal husbandry and food production. Other projects include a teak plantation with cash crops as well as a rubber and bamboo plantation.

Much of this valuable work is taking place in areas that have been vulnerable to natural disasters and where ethnic minority and tribal populations suffered most harshly under military rule.

As we know from the news, not all of Myanmar's darkest days are over. But it's the work of Episcopal Relief & Development and the CPM to empower people to live productively and abundantly that shines the brightest light yet on the future.