

Seek & Serve



Episcopal
Relief & Development

Healing a hurting world

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Coming to the Aid of Syrian Refugees

While much of the world's attention has been focused on the barbaric use of chemical weapons and the international response to this attack, a massive humanitarian crisis has largely slipped under the media's radar screen, as more than two million Syrians have fled to

neighboring countries to escape the violence.

The Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, just across the border with Syria, is at the epicenter of this crisis. An average of 3,000 refugees enter Jordan from Syria each day and many of them end up in Zaatari, which now has a population of approximately 174,000. If it were a city, it would be the fourth largest in Jordan.

There, Episcopal Relief & Development is working with our longtime partner — the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf — to meet the needs of hundreds of people with disabilities, filling a critical gap left by conventional relief agencies.

Even under normal circumstances, people with disabilities in Syria, Jordan and many other countries are often excluded from society, and lack the support they need to thrive. These challenges are made far worse when they have to leave their homes and schools and settle in a temporary setting, where they become even more vulnerable and marginalized.

Building on its remarkable experience helping children with disabilities elsewhere in Jordan (see the accompanying article), the Holy Land Institute has conducted in-depth assessments of nearly 500 children in Zaatari over the past year. The support of Episcopal Relief & Development has enabled it to



Children and adults with special needs receive much needed support at the Zaatari Camp in Jordan.

diagnose, counsel, and provide rehabilitation and follow-up services to another 300 people with hearing, vision, physical, or cognitive disabilities. This includes equipping people with glasses, hearing aids, or wheelchairs, depending on their needs.

Episcopal Relief & Development will also support the Holy Land Institute in establishing special education programs in the Zaatari camp, including kindergarten classes for hearing, speech, and visually impaired children.

This work is making a profound, transformative difference in the lives of children who would otherwise fall between the cracks amid the chaos of life in a refugee camp.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

Replacing Darkness with the Light of Christ

The greatest joy of my work as president of Episcopal Relief & Development is when I witness firsthand the transformative change being created by our partners in the field.

One of these partners is the Holy Land Institute for Deaf, whose remarkable work is described in detail in this issue of *Seek & Serve*.

The Institute's director, The Very Rev. Canon Brother Andrew A.L. de Carpentier, has been doing the Lord's work for years, ministering to and empowering people with disabilities in Jordan. Now, he and his colleagues are doing the same for Syrian refugees who have sought shelter in the Zaatari Camp just over the Jordanian border.

Brother Andrew wrote a prayer for refugees that is both deeply moving and a thoughtful explanation of why serving those who have been displaced is so central to Episcopal Relief & Development's mission. I'd like to share it with you:

Dear Lord,

You know what it means to be a refugee. You also lost all and perhaps remembered how you came to be hungry and naked, thirsty and cold, prisoners in a camp or prisoners in our own minds. They even took your cloak and you had nothing left, except some people who came by to quench your thirst, to give you a blanket and to help carry your burden.

Lord Jesus, for God's sake, let us be those people who bring comfort, food and water, and an encouraging word. And may we then hear the words softly spoken: "insofar as you did it unto these people who are the least of my brothers, you did it unto me. Go in peace!"

Refugees are often among "the least of my brothers" even before they are displaced from their homes — living in poverty, deprived of opportunity, struggling with hunger, suffering from preventable illness, unable to access clean water. Those living with disabilities are further marginalized. All too often, they live in the darkness, hidden away from others, largely out of sight from the rest of the community.

What Episcopal Relief & Development does, through partners like the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, is bring the light of Christ into their lives to replace the darkness. The light of being seen and recognized as our fellow children of God. The light of opportunity from gaining skills that enable them to become productive, contributing members of society. The light of being treated with respect and dignity, at long last.

I, for one, cannot think of a better way to put Christ's teachings into action.

Yours faithfully,

Robert W. Radtke, President

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Episcopal Relief & Development is also working to ease the humanitarian crisis through another partnership — with the Lebanon-based Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches — in Syria itself. The Fellowship, of which the Diocese of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem is a member, is working in Homs, a frequent flashpoint where army and rebel forces are engaged in a protracted struggle for control. Between 60 and 70 percent of the district's buildings have been damaged or destroyed, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, while business and commerce have ground to a halt, leaving many unemployed.

In response, the Fellowship is distributing food, medicine, blankets, clothing, building materials, and rent assistance to families in Homs. This is a way both to provide urgent relief to those who are suffering, and to alleviate the refugee crisis by helping to make it possible for families to stay in their homes.

While the scope of the Syrian crisis is massive and no resolution is in sight, Episcopal Relief & Development is doing everything in our power to answer the call, and to ease the pain of those suffering from violence, destruction, and the breakdown of society.



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Out of the Shadows

In Jordan, as in many countries, children with disabilities are often hidden away in their homes and kept out of school, treated by their families and the society around them as a mark of shame. They are rarely discussed or acknowledged, their needs are seldom met, and opportunities to become productive members of society are largely nonexistent.

The Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, with the support of Episcopal Relief & Development, has been stepping boldly into this void. Five years ago, it established the Jofeh Community Rehabilitation Center in the town of Jofeh in the Dead Sea Valley, to serve people with disabilities in 13 surrounding villages. They are being provided with equipment and learning devices, physiotherapy, audiological testing, hearing aids, hearing aid repair/maintenance, and ear molds, as well as eye tests and eye glasses.

Equally important, the Jofeh Center offers vocational training and employment programs to empower disabled young men and women to work and earn an income. This training not only improves their professional and social status — it also allows them to play a role in decision-making and administration of the school.

The transformative impact of the Institute's work can be seen in the story of Manwa, a hearing-impaired girl who was kept at home for the first 15 years of her life. When she was brought to the Jofeh Center for vocational training, she was allowed to choose whatever work she preferred, on her own timetable; first it was paper recycling, then woodworking, and then embroidery.

Eventually, she became so proficient at a paper recycling technique that she now trains other children at the Center, and she earns her own pocket money. She also does embroidery at home to bring in more money, and supervises the cleaning and upkeep of the Center.



Regular eye exams are just one of the many important services provided by the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf.

Experiences such as Manwa's have increased demand for the Institute's services throughout the country. In response to numerous requests, the Institute established the Kreimeh Community Rehabilitation Center, located 40 kilometers north of Jofeh, last year. It is now providing similar services for people with disabilities in more than 11 nearby communities.

As a result, at long last, people with disabilities are finding long-closed doors opened into a new world of possibilities for productive and fulfilling lives.

Matching Gift Challenge to Raise \$1,000,000 for Global Needs

Until December 6, any donation made to Episcopal Relief & Development will be matched, dollar-for-dollar up to \$500,000. This means a total of up to \$1 million for relief and development programs in the places that need them most. Give today and double the impact of your support!

A Beacon of Hope in South Sudan

Life is not easy in South Sudan. Since gaining independence in 2011, the country has struggled to find solid footing in the face of often severe violence, which has displaced thousands and filled refugee camps along the border with Sudan. Basic infrastructure is almost non-existent, and the quest to build roads, schools, and medical facilities that people can depend on has just begun.

One beacon of stability and hope that continues to shine bright, however, is the Episcopal Church of Sudan, which is based in the South Sudan capital of Juba. The Church has more than 4,000,000 members, and is one of the region's largest and most vibrant civil society institutions. It has a presence in even the most remote of areas, making the church's various outreach arms, such as SUDRA (Sudanese Relief and Development Agency) and the Health Commission, uniquely positioned to have a significant and positive impact on this growing nation.

Addressing the country's healthcare crisis is an urgent priority, and an important focus of the Health Commission's partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development. South Sudan has some of the world's worst health indicators, including the highest



A new health clinic will make a huge difference to children living in and around Wau, South Sudan.

maternal mortality rate. In response, we have launched a partnership effort to build, staff, and equip a series of new health clinics. An important part of the start-up process will include financial training, which often gets short shrift, ensuring that these clinics will be self sustaining, and viable over the long run. In a country where most people have never been to a doctor, the initiative is literally a lifesaver, bringing both medical services, and a stronger sense of community to people in need.

Filling an Ark with *Gifts for Life*

How do we teach our children to care about the world in which we live? Build an ark!



Colorful animal cutouts symbolize the donations made to *Gifts for Life*.

The project was a huge success — and the young people of the parish played a big role. “We wanted to show the children that we care about people we’ll never meet, across the world.” To learn more about how your parish can participate in *Gifts for Life*, visit episcopalrelief.org/toolkits for tools and inspiration.

That was the strategy taken last fall by the rector at Calvary Episcopal Church in Williamsville, NY, when he launched a year-long project that involved the whole parish, including many young people. The ambitious goal was to raise money for Episcopal Relief & Development's *Gifts for Life* program, have some fun, and open people's eyes to the impact they can have on the lives of others.

A handmade plywood ark was proudly affixed to a wall in the fellowship hall, with maps on either side to illustrate where a family might receive their gift. All that was needed was the animals! The primary school group raised money for a goose. The senior high group held a bake sale to raise money for a cow. And the junior high group took the spirit of the Ark to heart, setting a goal of raising enough funds to purchase one of every animal in the catalog!