

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

Seek & Serve



Episcopal
Relief & Development

Healing a hurting world

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Healing Those Hurting From Disaster

When the devastating, two-mile-wide tornado slammed into Moore, Oklahoma, on May 20, the destruction was almost beyond imagination. People in this tight-knit community lost loved ones, were severely injured, and saw homes, schools, and parts of their

community completely destroyed.

The pain people suffer from a disaster is immense — and long-lasting. One doesn't recover or rebuild in a day, a month or even a year. Indeed, it's often after the



The tornado that hit Oklahoma left huge areas in ruin.

Photo Courtesy of Christina Noe for Episcopal Relief & Development

major relief organizations have packed up and the tragedy has long faded from the headlines — when lives and livelihoods must be rebuilt — that people need the most help. And that is exactly where Episcopal Relief & Development works, alongside local churches to fill the void and truly heal the hurt of disaster.

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Ben's Lighthouse

Episcopal Relief & Development's U.S. Disaster Response Program doesn't only respond to natural disasters — we also reach out in the wake of human tragedies like the December 14, 2012, mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut.

Sadly, one of the children killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School was a parishioner, Ben Wheeler, who attended Trinity Episcopal Church.

In the months since this horrific event, Episcopal Relief & Development has been assisting the Trinity community in launching Ben's Lighthouse to help address the trauma felt not only by those directly affected, but by many others throughout the Newtown area.

Named in honor of Ben's love of lighthouses, the project is marked by a 20-foot, custom-built wooden lighthouse, which now stands proudly in front of Trinity.

Open to every child and youth in Newtown and surrounding communities, Ben's Lighthouse provides counseling for children and parents dealing with grief, anxiety or post-traumatic stress, and runs programs designed to support, uplift, and nurture children in a non-violent and caring culture.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:
**A SHARED
 COMMUNITY
 OF COMPASSION**

One of the many things that makes me so proud of our church is our “shared community of compassion” (as Episcopal Relief & Development’s new Director of Engagement, Sean McConnell, so aptly puts it) in response to natural disasters and other misfortunes that befall our fellow children of God.

It’s hard to fathom the horrors endured by the people of Moore, Oklahoma, when their community was devastated by a massive tornado. But the weight of the tragedy — the grief, sorrow and trauma — was eased to the best extent possible by the outpouring of support offered by Episcopal dioceses and parishes, clergy and parishioners, as well as so many people of other faiths.

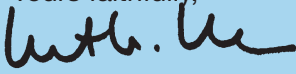
Whether a disaster occurs in Oklahoma or Haiti or anywhere else, our church’s spirit of generosity — of seeking and serving Christ in all persons — is nothing short of inspirational.

It may be best exemplified by Ben’s Lighthouse, an organization based at Trinity Episcopal Church in Newtown, Connecticut, formed after parishioner Ben Wheeler was one of the 20 children murdered in the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. On the six-month anniversary of the tragedy, Ben’s Lighthouse held a Lighthouse Festival featuring works of art by Newtown students, music and theater presentations to celebrate children and youth in the community.

It is both astonishing and stirring every time people who have suffered unspeakable tragedy rally together to help others who are reeling from their own catastrophes. Within our community, it happens over and over again in ways that lift up the soul.

Indeed, as you’ll read in this issue of Seek & Serve, members of our church are deeply engaged in the mission of Episcopal Relief & Development as we help disaster victims not only get through their immediate crises but recover and rebuild their lives over the long run. You’ll also read about the wonderful work of Women Helping Women, a group of parishioners from St. Andrew’s Church in Saratoga, California, helping mothers achieve financial independence.

Above all, what I believe emerges is a remarkable story of people turning their deep faith and boundless compassion into concrete action by supporting Episcopal Relief & Development as we work together to help “the least of these.” To be a part of this process is surely one of the greatest blessings of my life.

Yours faithfully,

 Robert W. Radtke
 President

Have a Lasting Impact: Join the *Matthew25* *Legacy Society*

Giving, serving and planning for the future make for good stewardship. A planned gift to Episcopal Relief & Development allows you to help save lives and transform communities while maximizing potential financial benefit for yourself and your family.



That’s what Leigh and Jonathan Serrie of Atlanta found. Involved in their church, Jonathan serves Episcopal Relief & Development as a parish representative at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church.

“Jonathan and I decided to give through the *Matthew25 Society* at the same time we were discussing planned giving to our parish,” said Leigh. “We consider Episcopal Relief & Development’s life-saving and life-changing work to be a global extension of what our church does locally. So, including both in our planned giving was a way for us to leave a gift to our church family and to our brothers and sisters around the world.”

Planned gifts are especially important because they allow Episcopal Relief & Development to devote additional resources to areas of greatest need. For example, it was planned gifts that allowed us to expand our U.S. Disaster Response program, which has become an increasingly important resource for churches around the country. Thanks to the generosity of *Matthew25 Legacy Society* members, we are extending our reach and doing even more to heal a hurting world.

To learn more about planned giving and whether the *Matthew25 Legacy Society* is right for you, please visit our website at www.episcopalrelief.org/plannedgiving or feel free to call our offices at 1.855.312.HEAL (4325).

The Power of the Parish

After being inspired to embrace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by their former rector, Jean Hankey and seven friends from St. Andrew's Church in Saratoga, California, founded Women Helping Women. They educated themselves on the importance of the MDGs and formed a group to respond to the needs of women. They especially focused on mothers who needed to find ways to sustain their families, so helping women gain independence and financial security has been a priority.

These dedicated volunteers of Women Helping Women have worked hard to provide a helping hand to families in need, and have raised funds in a variety of ways, including a book cart, which is popular among parishioners at the church's coffee hour.

We are honored that the group has decided to send their funds to Episcopal Relief & Development by purchasing micro-credit loans for women, one of many gifts offered in the *Gifts for Life* catalog that create economic opportunities for women and strengthen families and communities.



The Women Helping Women group at St. Andrew's Church in Saratoga, CA, has raised funds in several ways but continuous funds are raised by their book cart.

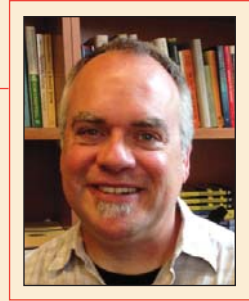
“By sending our funds through Episcopal Relief & Development, we could feel confident that our efforts are indeed reaching the very poor women who desperately need help in working their way out of poverty,” said Jean Hankey. “Episcopal Relief & Development is a wonderful way for a small group to contribute to a larger issue.”

To learn more about the many gifts offered through *Gifts for Life* visit us at www.episcopalrelief.org/giftsforlife.

Meet the Staff:

Sean McConnell

Director of Engagement



As a young boy growing up in Arkansas, Sean learned firsthand the fear of running from a menacing storm that had the capacity to upend his world. “It’s the most helpless feeling — that you have no control over something so frightening.”

But as the son of a priest, he also learned about the power of community — a community of compassion — that could help you get through hard times and allow you to truly connect with Christ in this world.

“From the time when I was a boy, filling mite boxes that would support the work of the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief, I have long been interested in how our church reaches those on the margins across the globe. It was this work that gave me an awareness of how connected we are and what communion means. We share a common life in Baptism and ministry with partners throughout the world, and Episcopal Relief & Development honors that common call to be the hands of Christ to those who need it most.”

Since joining our staff in May, Sean has been learning about the workings of Episcopal Relief & Development from the inside. With partners in nearly 40 countries around the world, he is astounded and excited by how much there is to learn. “The scope of what is accomplished with the support of Episcopalians and friends is beyond incredible.”

With his sights set on creating and supporting relationships between churches here at home and our partners around the world, Sean is committed to ensuring that our shared community of compassion continues to grow.

Do you want to know how you can help us build stronger, healthier communities across the globe? Check out the Church In Action section on our website for information on Worship Resources, Toolkits and Christian Formation programs.
www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action

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In Oklahoma, we brought in two members of our *Partners in Response* team — our mobile group of experts in disaster and recovery planning — to help the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma develop a comprehensive long-term recovery program enabling those who lost so much to eventually reestablish their lives in ways that are as good or even better than before.



Rebuilding after such massive destruction will require a long-term commitment.

Photo Courtesy of Christina Noe for Episcopal Relief & Development

Some of the long-term efforts of the recovery plan will be based at Santa María Virgen Iglesia Episcopal, a large church south of Oklahoma City. The church serves many immigrants who are especially vulnerable to falling between the cracks and not receiving the aid they need to help them get back on their feet.

The local churches are also providing pastoral counseling and helping people in the community negotiate the various government and private sector bureaucracies to ensure that they receive aid available from FEMA, emergency food stamps, unemployment assistance, insurance settlements and other assistance as needed.

The importance of staying with communities and delivering post-disaster relief is being demonstrated along the mid-Atlantic coast where today we are providing critical services to people harmed by Super Storm Sandy, which struck in late October 2012. Our partner, the Dioceses of New Jersey, has established a walk-in resource center in Atlantic City. Many renters, low-income families and undocumented immigrants live in the area — all people disproportionately likely to need help in order to access the aid and services they need to get their lives back on track.

In New York City, we are supporting our partner, the Diocese of New York, in bringing young adults to lead volunteer teams helping to rebuild hard-hit Staten Island through the Episcopal Service Corps. And in Crisfield, Maryland, a small town on the Chesapeake Bay in the state's poorest county and where over 350 homes were lost, we are working with the Diocese of Easton to rebuild people's houses.

Equally important, Episcopal Relief & Development continues to expand our Disaster Preparedness Program. This past year, we held initial training conferences for 53 church leaders representing 36 dioceses and advanced training for 20 people representing 15 dioceses, empowering them to develop and implement disaster preparedness plans. This initiative has been very successful in ensuring that a rapidly growing number of Episcopal dioceses and parishes are ready to quickly respond and serve their communities when a tornado, hurricane, earthquake, flood, wildfire or other catastrophe strikes.

That's why supporting Episcopal Relief & Development's U.S. Disaster Fund not only ensures that all God's children receive the help they need when catastrophe strikes — it also builds the capacity of our dioceses and parishes to serve as indispensable community resources in troubled times.

Episcopal Relief & Development's *Gifts for Life* is an opportunity for each of us to put our faith into action, show compassion for our neighbors, and help others build new prosperity and healthier lives. Purchase a gift in honor of a friend or loved one through this unique gift catalog and not only will your gift directly impact the lives of those in need, it will help entire communities break the cycle of poverty. From food and water to medical care and small business loans, *Gifts for Life* help more than individuals and families — they provide entire communities with sustainable resources for the future. Visit our website at www.episcopalrelief.org/giftsforlife.

