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MDGs Present Exciting New Challenges for Discipleship

A WORD FROM OUR MDG COORDINATOR



Debra Smithdeal
Diocese of North Carolina

When Bishop Michael Curry called me last year and gave me the opportunity to be the MDG Coordinator for the Diocese of North Carolina, I was a little apprehensive. I asked him for some time to pray and think (and pray some more). I had just recently resigned as the chair for the Province IV Network of AIDS Ministries, and I really was not sure what (if anything) I wanted to do next. Well, after much prayer and many con-

versations with God, I called Bishop Curry and told him yes. Be careful what you say yes to if Bishop Curry is involved! My life since that moment has been filled with so many gifts and blessings that I will never be able to count them!

The Bishop and I got together and put our thoughts down about what the committee should be, and then he left for General Convention and I got started trying to figure out who my companions could be on this new journey. Our committee has become a community and we all have our strengths and our weaknesses, just like all humans. But, we all have the same hearts and the same

passion and are very committed to doing what we can to help address the Millennium Development Goals for the Diocese of North Carolina. Our mission is to educate, advocate and to recommend projects for funding.

Now, that sounds easy, doesn't it? Think again. Our biggest obstacle thus far has been to educate everyone throughout the diocese; beginning with the very basic question of what the Millennium Development Goals are. I must admit that when you look at the MDGs it is easy to think, "There is no way I can make a difference". What we have tried to do is to break the goals down into doable ways to serve. Dr. Leon Spencer, the Dean of our School of Ministry, has a wonderful curriculum for parish study of the MDGs, *Mission and Ministry through the Millennium Development Goals*, and Lallie Lloyd, of Chapel Hill, also has an equally wonderful study guide called *Eradicating Global Poverty: A Christian Study Guide on the Millennium Development Goals*. We held training to equip facilitators for both of these studies, and to my knowledge, they have been beneficial to many parishes. I encourage everyone to use these resources.



We have parishes and missions across our diocese that started with the basics and are making huge strides in mission. There are parishes teaming with enthusiasm, and if you know anything at all about Bishop Michael Curry, you can feel his enthusiasm, which is always contagious!

I would like to thank Bishop Curry and the members of the MDG committee for their support, assistance, and guidance throughout this year. My life is so much richer with new knowledge and passion for our world.

The faithful members of our committee are Karen Price, St. Martin's Charlotte; David Haygood, Good Shepherd, Raleigh; Lisa Towle, Good Shepherd, Raleigh; Patricia Watts, Chapel of the Cross, Chapel Hill; Reverend Deb Blackwood, Church of the Beloved, Charlotte; Scott Evans Hughes, St. Stephen's, Durham and Lallie Lloyd, Church of the Holy Family, Chapel Hill. They are the ones who are helping the people of the Diocese of North Carolina make a difference through the Millennium Development Goals. ☩

St. Martin's, Charlotte, Making a Difference through the MDGs Campaign Combats Malaria



BY DEBRA SMITHDEAL
ST. MARTIN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, CHARLOTTE

Congregation of St. Martin's holding two banners covered with 2,880 handprints, representing the people who die daily from malaria.

I just continue to be awed when God puts people in my path. The idea just popped into my head – challenge our parishioners to give \$15 to send an insecticide-treated mosquito bed net to Africa. Then, knowing that Bishop Michael Curry was in negotiations with Bishop Trevor Musonda Mwamba of Botswana to form a new companion diocese relationship with the Diocese of North Carolina, I thought, wow, we will just designate them for Botswana! Being the Millennium Development Goals Coordinator for the Diocese of North Carolina, I knew that we could

also address Millennium Development Goal # 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

After approaching our Stewardship Chair (at St. Martin's, Charlotte), John Munce, with this idea, the plan began. We met with Scott Duffy and the Mission Board and got their cooperation and the Nets for Botswana campaign was set!

We announced the campaign would be for a period of four weeks – May 6-June 3, hoping to raise \$3000 for 200 nets. The money would

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Advocacy & the MDGs at The Chapel of the Cross

BY PATRICIA A. WATTS
CHAPEL OF THE CROSS, CHAPEL HILL

It all started with the reading of Jim Wallis' book, "God's Politics". Two summers ago the participants of the discussion group expressed concerns about the underlying public policy issues of those in need in our midst and around the world and wondered how our congregation might be engaged in advocacy efforts.

Mary Getz, from the Episcopal Public Policy Network in Washington, DC, was invited in January 2006 to lead a convocation-wide event where she led us through advocacy training and passed out copies of "Engage God's Mission: Policy for Action" (The Social Policies of the Episcopal Church, U.S.A.), which includes a multitude of policy positions from domestic issues to the Millennium Development Goals.

Our parish has committees and projects which disburse an abundance of outreach funds, send folks on mission trips, teach us about global warming and climate change and the vestry has designated 0.7% of the budget toward the MDGs – all incredibly important endeavors. And yet, our group yearned for more – we wanted to offer opportunities to learn about Episcopal views and official stances on social justice plus we wanted to provide opportunities for parishioners to act on their convictions.

We began with an Adult Education offering: a study of "What Can One Person Do?: Faith to Heal a Broken World". We learned about the MDGs – what they are and how to energetically address them as Episcopalians are called to do.

Then, the Micah Planning Team formed to plan activi-

ties, develop goals and create a structure for engagement and action. The congregation was invited to the first Micah Group gathering last October with a follow up meeting in November. The full Micah Group does not have regularly scheduled meetings but forms the nucleus for parish wide events.

At our first meeting we created a vision for our work as the Micah Group. Since the prophet Micah (6:8) implores us to, "act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God," our mission statement reads: *Striving for justice and peace among all peoples, the Micah Group seeks to educate and engage our congregation in meaningful advocacy. We are guided by the Episcopal Church's stances on issues of social justice, including but not limited to the Millennium Development Goals.*

Last fall, we assisted in the Intergenerational Event on hunger which focused on Goal #1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – participants made dry soup mix for the community food pantry, learned about the targets for eradicating worldwide hunger, looked at maps, created banners and artwork, and discussed the issue in small groups. Our children produced amazing artwork and profound ideas.

Early in 2007 Adult Education presented the first session of "Mission & Ministry through the MDGs", a resource study developed by the Rev. Leon Spencer. The class focused on encouraging reflection about God's mission on earth and upon God's calling to us. This step back helped us understand the meaning of "mission", our understanding of mission and what our personal calling might be. We regret not planning to work through the entire study guide and recommend that others do so.



Retired deacon, The Rev. Martha Hart works on STOP HUNGER banner with a family in her group



Children create soup mix in the library, using several beans and spices. PHOTOS COURTESY OF TED PRAIT

This spring another book study guided us through fellow Episcopalian Lallie Lloyd's "Eradicating Global Poverty" published by the National Council of Churches. Lallie participated in the first session by sharing her commitment and depth of knowledge. Then, as the second session began one of our participants introduced her son (a former acolyte at COTC) who is now a physician practicing at a rural hospital in Rwanda. The group sat mesmerized as someone on the front lines of improving maternal health, saving babies, and treating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other terrible diseases shared the story of his young family's call to make their home in a third world country.

On Mother's Day (it is the mothers, after all, who feed the children) we used Bread for the World materials to write letters to our Members of Congress in support of specific inclusions in the 2007 Farm Bill which will help farmers in developing countries. During the Offertory the following Sunday, 63 letters were carried to the altar and then mailed to Washington, DC.

Parishioners are encouraged to respond to social justice legislative alerts from the Episcopal Public Policy Network and the Episcopal ONE Campaign. We ask ourselves, do our public policies undercut Christ's teachings? Each year Congress considers hundreds of bills that impact the mission of the Church. As Episcopalians, we have a perspective of public policy that, we believe, our nation's leaders need to hear.

We are also asking our congregation to prayerfully consider a 0.7% pledge of their personal income as modeled by our parish, our diocese and our national church. Our Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori has said "... the MDGs can only be met by governmental generosity, and it will be here that the next work of the MDGs is going to have to focus. You and I as Episcopalians, and all the other like-minded folks we can muster, of whatever faith or denomination or none are now going to have to lobby our government to raise the level of aid we give to 1 percent of the annual budget." If we have made our own pledges, we can then prove to our Members of Congress just how essential the achievement of the MDGs is to people of faith.

Each event brings in a few more parishioners seeking to learn and become engaged with the Millennium Development Goals. We are deepening our understanding of the problems families in developing countries face everyday and we are equipping ourselves for the next half of this journey. Educate and advocate – that's what we do! ☩

TAKING THE MDGs TO HEART How One Woman and One Dollar Made a Difference!

BY COLLEEN SPENCER
ST. MARTIN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, CHARLOTTE

My Lenten Studies experience at St. Martin's was very enlightening. Week after week, meeting on Sunday nights in the Parish Hall with Debra Smithdeal, we read about Africa's crushing health problems. Not just HIV/AIDS, but malnutrition, malaria, tainted water, infant mortality, and on and on.

Statistics on women who die in childbirth and babies who don't survive to their first birthday haunted me particularly. Mothers whose children are dying; children whose mothers are dying...

While working through the study material, with its dismal news from around the globe, our St. Martin's group talked among ourselves about how powerless we felt, how overwhelming the problems, and how little we could do. We learned about a worldwide effort under way to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015, the Millennium Development Goals. We were asked to pray, spread the word and give money. But how much good would our minor donations do in the face of such massive need?

Then Ty Smithdeal said something that turned my thinking around: Absurdly small amounts of money can have huge impact in Africa.

One thing I could do, I thought, was to make an appeal at the Women's Retreat at Valle Crucis, more to raise awareness than money. We were meeting with the women of St. Alban's in Davidson, 35 of us in all. Perhaps together we could reach out to some African women not so different from ourselves.

I set a basket on the table and challenged each woman to donate a token dollar for each time she personally had survived childbirth. I wanted us to identify with women mired in extreme poverty, to think about the contrast between our worlds, our experience. In some areas of Africa, I told them, a woman has a one in 16 chance of

dying in childbirth; in North America, it's one in 3,500.

I wanted us all thinking about what it was like for us to be pregnant, with ultrasounds and blood tests and emergency C-sections in state-of-the-art hospitals. Vitamins, Pampers, Gerbers. And to think about having none of that, not even enough to eat to produce adequate breast milk, not even clean drinking water.

I struggled to explain how my thinking had changed: I couldn't save them all, but what I could give might save one woman's life by training a midwife or providing basic prenatal care through a mobile health clinic. It might save one woman's children through postnatal care or childhood immunizations. Not much in the whole scheme of things maybe, but huge, miraculous, for one family.

Then Linda Smith bailed me out by offering the starfish story: two boys walking on a beach littered with beached starfish as far as the eye can see. One boy picks up a starfish and flings it back out to sea. The other boy asks why he bothered; saving one hardly makes a difference. "Right," said the first boy. "But I'll bet it made a big difference to that starfish."

The women at the retreat got it, pitching dollar bills into the basket in gratitude for their own luck in surviving to raise their children. Some also gave for others in their families: sisters, daughters, mothers. By day's end we had \$93. Somebody topped it up to an even \$100. By next morning, another dollar had appeared.

In mid-March, we sent a St. Martin's check for \$101 to Episcopal Relief and Development in New York, asking that it be applied to projects that provide prenatal and postnatal care in areas of extreme poverty in Africa.

And I believe those women whose token dollars went into that basket went home ready to learn, pray and think about how they can make a difference to perhaps just one African woman and her family. ☩

Draft Covenant

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as we seek to love and serve Christ in fulfillment of our Baptismal commitments. The Body of Christ image teaches us that diversity is a fundamentally constitutive element of the created order. It is also theologically true that the diversity of the created order reflects the diversity or differentiation within God's self.

Clearly from the Christian Scriptures and Tradition, the diversity that inheres in the created order and God also inheres in the Church. The practical question facing our Church and the Communion is: What, if any, are the limits or boundaries of that diversity? Jesus summarized the Law and the Prophets (the boundaries/body's limits) in three points: Love God. Love yourself. Love your neighbor as yourself. No part of the body can say to any other part of the body that it is not needed. It is not about convenience, liking it, or like-mindedness. The essential nature of the church from this perspective is one of great diversity and variety, and the capacity of the Church to differentiate within itself is fundamentally without limits. But does that take us to a place where anything at all is acceptable? Of course not. The boundary is love: holy love, godly love. As St. Augustine put it, "Love God and do what you will."

However, we do need always to remember that our capacity and ability to live the Baptismal Covenant is, "With God's help". Within the context of a theology of the Church that has been outlined here, we may ask: Does this covenant order the life and work of the Church and the relationships among the People of God in such a way that the diversity and differences that inhere in God and the created order are honored, protected, and engaged as assets for mission and ministry in the Name of Jesus Christ? Does this draft covenant build

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a space in which it is safe for God's beloved to explore, question, discern, experiment, fail and succeed? Will this draft covenant create a community of relentless, steadfast love in which God's people will thrive in the diversity and particularity of each person as God has created them?

Ecclesiastical Implications

No one, in fact, knows what the outcome of this process of reviewing and responding to this draft will be. The question has neither really been asked nor addressed whether we ought to have a covenant or whether such a document is the best, most powerful, transformative, and generative way for the Anglican Communion to respond to God's call to us in these days. Our Presiding Bishop wisely sees it is an opportunity to pause, take a breath, and reflect on what it can or does mean to be Anglican, to be the Anglican Communion, and how we can and will live together as a hugely disparate group of Provinces. Historically, it has been sufficient that we held the common bond of communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. We shared a heritage of origin historically and theologically as well as liturgically and sacramentally. Beyond that, we were a loosely connected body of colonial and post-colonial churches who until very recently, worshipped out of a *Book of Common Prayer* that was essentially the same

throughout the world. Structurally, apart from the Archbishop of Canterbury, all of our structures (The Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting) are recent novelties, the latter two having only been created in the late 20th century.

Now we have come to a time when we all must re-examine the needs, the mission and ministry, and the most effective structures for implementing our mission and ministry as the Anglican Communion. The draft covenant marks one aspect of a substantial period of transition in which those who were once far off now find themselves quite near. This is a time for listening deeply with the ear of our hearts to what the Spirit is saying. It is a time for remembering that what ultimately holds us together is not ecclesiastical structures, covenants, or processes, nor even agreement or being of one mind, but only and always the steadfast love of God, incarnate in Jesus Christ within and among us now through the Holy Spirit. Desmond Tutu once was asked, "What does the Anglican Communion do?" He responded, "We meet." We come together week by week for the corporate, liturgical, sacramental gathering of God's People and to be sent out into the world to love and serve the Lord.

The draft covenant is an attempt to order the life and work of the Anglican

Communion, to provide a framework for appropriate governance, especially when there is disagreement or conflict and to address highly complex realities within a global organization of immense diversity in order to be clear in our identity, our mission and ministry, and about the structures and processes of the relationships among the Provinces. This, of course, brings us back to the basic theological question, "What do we think and understand the Church to be?" This question needs to be clearly answered before a covenant is drafted.

The Anglican Tradition has always been one that prayed its theology. When we look at the Baptismal Covenant of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) of The Episcopal Church we find the principal theological and sacramental articulation of what we as Episcopalians understand being one of the beloved and redeemed children of God means. There are three essentials to this covenant with God and the Church: to believe (the creedal portion), to participate in the life of the Church, and to embody our relationship with God in daily living.

The Baptismal Covenant is the context within which we order our lives as Lay Persons, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. We understand that all these "body parts" are essential and necessary for the mission and ministry of the Church. We understand that grounded in Baptism, we are all indwelt by the Spirit, empowered for ministries, and sent into the world to love and serve the Lord. While the way we pray Baptism and ground our lives in this sacrament may be particular to The Episcopal Church, it is nonetheless our way. Therefore, we need to ask of this draft covenant, How does it embody for us an understanding of Church sacramentally grounded in Baptism? How does it embody Church as inviting, empowering, and sending out all of God's people to love and serve? How does this covenant affirm, nurture, and sustain the participation of all people, Lay and Ordained, in the life and work of the Church? ☩

St. Martin's

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be sent to Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) and from there the nets would be sent to Botswana. Teams were formed; one for marketing, one for speaking and education, one for manning tables and collection—the response was fabulous! Young and old were excited and ready to do what they could.

I spoke to the congregation on Sunday mornings, educating everyone about malaria; about how many die each day from this deadly disease (2,880); about the nets and prevention; and that ERD not only provides the nets but also the training to use and to maintain them—all for \$15! One of our ladies, Terry Ertel, made two banners that were covered with 2,880 handprints, representing the people who die daily. One Sunday I gave out black paper circles with a time on the back, asking that the person stick the circle on their back at that specific time during the morning service. During the announcement time of the service I asked all of those folks to stand and announced that 90 people had died since our service began. I was very specific about who received the circles; picking a good representation of our parish

and then asked people to think what our community would look like without these folks in it. All of this was very moving, and people began to really think about how we would all feel if we were subject to this (or any) deadly disease. The catalyst, though, I think, was that everyone knew that *their* \$15 would help someone. It is not a lot of money; some gave \$15; some gave hundreds. But each \$15 helped prevent someone from getting malaria.

Halfway through the campaign a very generous parishioner offered to match what we raised, dollar for dollar! That just encouraged us even more!



(From left) Debra Smithdeal, Terry Ertel, Wendy Munce, The Rev. Murdock Smith, and Scott Duffy display check representing monies raised to send mosquito nets to Africa.

St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Charlotte has sent ERD a check for \$17,460!! 1164 mosquito bed nets for Botswana!! We are very happy to be the first parish of the diocese to send a gift to our new companion diocese.

I am so overwhelmed and proud of the people of St. Martin's for their participation (and also friends and coworkers) in this campaign. Results far exceeded expectations. Never underestimate what God can do when one little seed is planted!

For further information please email episditioncmdg@aol.com. ☩

1 The origin of the Quadrilateral was to define for Anglicans, in an ecumenical context, the "marks" of the Church: what are the essentials that must be present for us to recognize "church".

2 *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 304-05. One has to note that this reference is particular to TEC. The Baptismal Covenant that we know is not found in many baptismal liturgies of the Provinces. We need to be mindful that we frame our theology and questions in a particular theological context that may not be a part of the theological context of other Provinces. We need to be further mindful to ask where and how is the understanding of Church grounded theologically and sacramentally in other Provinces.

3 See *The Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer* (1979), p. 305.