

A Word from the Bishop

Dear Friends:

Have you ever heard of a community outreach program entitled, "Christmas in April?" If you lived in Cecil or Queen Anne's Counties in our diocese, you know what I am referring to.

This program, held normally in April on the last Saturday of the month, is designed to assist those in need of having extensive repairs done to their homes. Sometimes it is the older and more mature members of our communities who need to have a handicap ramp built for easier access. Occasionally it is a roof being repaired or wall board replaced and walls painted or plumbing redone. Whatever is needed by those requesting assistance, volunteers spend one whole Saturday and most of Sunday assisting their neighbor.

I would like to introduce you to a new program called, Christmas in July. It is brand-new and before the writing of this article, never put in print or read by anyone, even me. I know that we celebrate Christmas on the 25th of July at Camp Wright, but this is different.

Christmas in July involves the giving of gifts, but only one kind. You do not have to stand in lines at Kmart or Macy's or Target; they don't have this gift. You may be able to order one from L.L. Bean or Land's End, but I doubt it. The gift that is brought here fits all sizes and it only has one size. The gift that is given in this program only goes to one group of people, and is only given to people you will never see or meet or even get a return gift from – that is, except, the gift of gratitude for caring for a total stranger living thousands of mile away.

What I am proposing is that we, the people of the Diocese of Easton, purchase nets for the

people of less developed countries of the world and try to fight the spread of malaria. It will be our celebration of Christmas, only it will be in July and August, not December. Over the past two years, I have asked you to reach out to those in need of clean drinking water and in making improvements to homes and other facilities of those less fortunate than ourselves. I will not ask you to do this at Christmas this year.

After reading Roberta Gribbon's article, "One Thousand Nets: Can Our Diocese Provide Them?" in the *Eastern Shore Episcopalian* last month, I could not let this challenge go ignored. We may suffer from mosquito bites here on the Eastern Shore, but we can survive. The people of Africa do not survive the mosquito bites because they carry the dreaded disease know as malaria.

Though easily preventable and treatable, malaria claims one million lives each year, with 90 percent of them in Africa. Another staggering static that comes from the Director of Church Engagement Programs of Episcopal

Relief & Development, Brian Sellers Petersen, is that malaria accounts for 18 percent of deaths among African children, compared to 8 percent globally.

Goal Six of the Millennium Development Goals is entitled: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. These diseases, including cholera and tuberculosis, are the leading causes of death in develop-

ing countries, especially among children, the elderly and pregnant women. As the people of the Baptismal Covenant, we declare that we will respect the dignity of every human being. We cannot ignore the fact that diseases like malaria and others are raging out of control. The use of nets to keep the mosquitoes from infecting human beings will go a long way in preventing

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the spread of disease.

Can we raise the money to purchase 1000 nets? Each net costs about 12 dollars. If every family in the diocese were to purchase one, we could easily handle the purchase of a gift that can literally give life and give more meaning to living the abundant life that our Lord spoke about in the Gospel (John 10:10).

As people of the Word, we only have to look at this scripture and know that this was a part of the ministry of our Lord and we are called to give life as he gave life.

"Jesus went throughout Galilee... preaching the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people." (Matthew 4:23)

I hope that you will join with me in this "Christmas in July" celebration. May the net of love that we cast be a net of life, of wholeness and of faith.

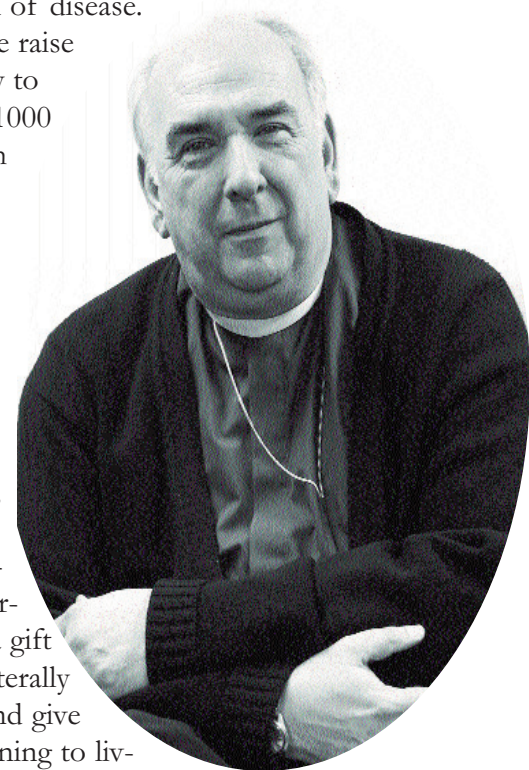
May God continue to bless you and yours during this summer.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+Bud

See the related article about Nets for Life on page A7

Please send your donation to the Diocese of Easton, marking it for Episcopal Relief & Development.



"See, I am making all things new."

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Editorial Board

Mrs. Bonnie Caudell, Dr. Roberta Gribbon
Heather Cook, Editor pro tem.

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Send submissions to:
ese@dioceseofeaston.org
(electronic always preferred)

or ESE Editor,
314 North Street,
Easton, MD 21601-3684.

Parish news is generally published on The Editor's Exchange pages, and may be sent directly to:

Bonnie Caudell
108 W. Federal Street,
Snow Hill, MD 21863

bonniesnowhill@intercom.net
To change subscription addresses,

contact:
Episcopal News Circulation Department,
PO Box 2050, Voorhees NJ 08043-8000
elife@aflwebprinting.com
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The Rt. Rev. James J. Shand, Bishop
"One Shepherd, One Fold," diocesan crozier