

Episcopal Relief and Development Report to the 2013 Diocesan Convention

The Rev. Janet Nocher, Diocesan Coordinator

October 15, 2013

The parishes and faith communities of the Diocese of Fort Worth actively and generously supported the work of Episcopal Relief and Development around the world in 2013. In 2012, Episcopal Relief and Development reached more than 3 million people in over 40 countries around the world.

Episcopal Relief and Development partners with the worldwide Anglican Communion and local organizations around the world to save lives and transform communities. We rebuild after disasters and empower people by offering lasting solutions that fight poverty, hunger and disease.

In the Diocese of Fort Worth, the Rev. Tracie Middleton took on the role of Episcopal Relief and Development Disaster Coordinator this past spring and attended a week's training in Atlanta. She submitted the following report:

“The late spring was unfortunately active for disaster response. The Diocese of Fort Worth responded to several disasters, both within our borders (tornados in Granbury and Cleburne), and in neighboring dioceses (explosion in West, TX and tornados in Oklahoma). People and dioceses around the country as well as our diocese sent donations to help with the responses in West and later in Oklahoma. Donations for tornado relief within the diocese are being divided between Granbury and Cleburne.

In Granbury, the tornado went through the Rancho Brazos neighborhood, killing six people and destroying or damaging about 100 homes, 60 of which were built by Habitat for Humanity. Good Shepherd, Granbury, having been a long time supporter of Habitat, immediately began looking for ways to help and continues to be involved in the long term recovery effort. Norm Snyder has been instrumental in that work, staying in communication with Habitat and the coalition of organizations comprising the Long Term Recovery Committee, which anticipates a two-year time line for the recovery efforts.

In Cleburne, a member of St. Luke's, Stephenville, Pam Yarborough, stepped forward to help connect the diocese to needs in that community. We decided to focus our efforts in a mobile home park that had suffered damage. There, we helped the owner cover the cost of transporting, setting up and renovating two mobile homes, collaborating with other community members, the Johnson County Builders' Association and the Chamber of Commerce. This support had a wider impact than we realized in that the park owner later told us he would have had to close and sell the park since the cost of rebuilding was more than he could cover without the help we were able to provide, along with others.

In addition to ongoing tornado recovery, disaster coordination goals for the remainder of the year include forming a committee to assist the coordinator, communicating with parishes to collect any completed parish disaster plans, and encouraging and supporting other parishes in creating plans.”

Many of our congregations have held fund raisers, using the resources sent to us by the national office of Episcopal Relief and Development.

Beginning before Advent 2012, several churches held Alternative Giving programs and Christmas Markets using Episcopal Relief and Development Gift Catalogs, and sent gifts of animals, water wells and mosquito nets, to name just a few of the choices available, to third world countries. Christmas cards were then sent to those in whose names the donations were made.

The recovery from the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 and recent hurricanes continues to bring a generous response from our churches and individual parishioners, and many have sent funds to help. In Lent, churches continued raising money by using the Episcopal Relief and Development Lenten Devotionals and mite boxes to raise awareness. Some congregations held bake sales and luncheons after Sunday services.

In May, the Episcopal Relief and Development annual convention was held in Newark, NJ. As a diocesan coordinator, I attended with coordinators from dioceses throughout the USA. I listened to many reports of worldwide aid and activities and was thoroughly impressed, and blessed, to hear of the many, many ways diocese throughout the USA are helping to heal a hurting world.

One very special fundraiser was the marvelous benefit production of Broadway's "Seussical the Musical" put on by young people from St. Alban's, Arlington and a local Methodist church, in August which netted over \$10,000, half of which went to Episcopal Relief and Development. This is the second year the young people have raised funds for Episcopal Relief and Development by performing Broadway plays. Special thanks go to Fr. Andrew Wright and Mtr Melanie Wright and their three talented offspring who gave untold hours of time to orchestrating and performing this production and it was outstanding!

In 2009, a resolution was passed at General Convention asking all of the dioceses to make the first Sunday in Lent Episcopal Relief and Development Sunday. This resolution was passed in the Diocese of Fort Worth, and is another way we contribute to the work of Episcopal Relief and Development. I will have Episcopal Relief and Development materials, including mite boxes, gift catalogs, etc., on a table in the vendor's hall at Diocesan Convention 2013 for folks to take back to their parishes/missions.

As Diocesan Coordinator I continue to work with parish representatives to promote Episcopal Relief and Development. I am available to speak to groups and order many supplies for our congregations at no cost. Deacon Tracie Middleton will also be available to speak on disaster planning in parishes/missions. Please contact me and Tracie if we may be of help.

Respectfully submitted,
Deacon Janet Nocher