

Can I Make a Difference Too?



There's a lot of news these days about philanthropy. People with staggeringly vast amounts of wealth are committing themselves generously and publicly to provide substantial financial support to causes of importance such as the elimination of poverty, the development of cures for diseases that afflict millions of people, and the education of young people. Not only do these contributions serve the greater good in that they provide badly needed resources to address issues such as these, but they also raise public awareness for many charitable endeavors. In addition to providing money, these people are also getting involved and working with experts to develop strategies for success, just as they did in their business lives. Their actions are praiseworthy, truly. I look at them and think to myself, *when I win the lottery I'm going to be just like them.*

It's easy to think like that. Most of us don't have billions, millions, or even thousands of dollars at our disposal. We're not connected to people in the highest echelons of government, business, education and medicine. We're too busy juggling responsibilities of jobs, family, and daily living to even sleep enough or eat properly, let alone contemplate devoting ourselves full time to helping others. Clearly making the world a better place is something best left to others who are up to the job. People who have more money, people who are smarter, people who know how to get the job done. Right?

It's easy to think like that. Until someone shows you how wrong you can be. Like a 7 year old child. Recently my nephew asked me for \$5. When I asked

what he needed it for, he told me it was for mosquito netting. Since it was still winter and because we don't exactly live in mosquito country, I started asking more questions. It turned out that in school they were learning about malaria, how it's caused and prevented, and why people in some countries can't prevent the disease from killing their children. Because they can't afford mosquito netting. Which costs approximately \$5 and can last for up to 10 years. So my nephew and his classmates decided to collect some money from around the neighborhood and send it to an international aid organization that provides mosquito netting to impoverished communities that need it. The children collected enough money for nearly 2,000 mosquito nets. Because they were not overwhelmed by what they couldn't do and instead did what they could, children half a world away might not get sick.

Occasionally at my congregation there is talk about the importance of making a planned gift such as a bequest or charitable gift annuity to support the future good work of our parish. I used to think they weren't talking to me, that they were talking to the wealthy parishioners. Now I know better. It doesn't matter what my gift can't do; it matters what it just might do. I may not be rich, but I can make a difference in the ministries of my church both today and after I'm gone.

For more information about making a planned gift to support the work of your Episcopal congregation, please contact the Episcopal Church Foundation at 800-697-2858 or visit www.EpiscopalFoundation.org.