

For Global Good

Presiding Bishop invites Church to widen 'shalom' by taking up U.N. Millennium Development Goals

In this octave of the Feast of All Saints, at this time of remembering the interconnectedness of communion and community, Katharine Jefferts Schori has begun her ministry as the Episcopal Church's 26th Presiding Bishop. Here she encourages each Episcopalian to care for all creation by living a local life for global good.



by Katharine Jefferts Schori

The Episcopal Church adopted a set of mission priorities at its General Convention in June. First among them is justice and peace work, framed by the Millennium Development Goals. We understand this work as a visible sign of the work of building the Reign of God. A vision of the Reign of God lies behind the ancient Hebrew concept of shalom, which means far more than simply peace. Shalom has to do with the restoration of all creation to right relationship with God, so that the hungry are fed, the grieving comforted, the ill are healed, and prisoners set free. The mission of the church, according to our Catechism, is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ (*Book of Common Prayer*, page 855). That work of restoration and reconciliation frames all our ministry as Christians, whether we are students, parents, legislators, or farmers. We cannot be at one with our neighbors if some are starving or living in slums. The work of achieving the Millennium Development Goals is intimately wrapped up in the promises we make in the baptismal covenant to engage in God's mission.

The other priorities adopted by our General Convention include work with young adults and youth, congregational transformation, reconciliation and evangelism, and partnerships within the Anglican Communion and with other faith communities. The first priority has important connections and impacts on the others – for example, partnerships in developing countries, often through Anglican churches, are essential and intrinsic elements of addressing most of the MDGs, and our youth and young adults will experience part of their formation as Christians in service to others.

The Millennium Development Goals seek to end the deep poverty that limits human flourishing. Achieving them would provide concrete examples of the abundant life Jesus insists is the reason he came among us – “I came that you might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

The Millennium Development Goals:

- Eradicate the poverty that sends one-third of the world's people to bed hungry each night
- Ensure universal primary education for girls as well as boys
- Promote gender equality and women's empowerment
- Improve maternal health
- Reduce childhood mortality
- Prevent diseases such as AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis
- Ensure environmental sustainability (including clean water and adequate sanitation)
- Develop partnerships for development

Some Episcopalians understand the mission of the church as solely focused on evangelism; others would see outreach work as primary. The baptismal covenant addresses both, and this first priority of the Church is the kind of deed-based evangelism that shows the world the good news of God's love through the actions of Christians. We can neglect neither, but we cannot speak much in the way of good news to people who are starving or dying of preventable disease. We must begin by doing good news with those who are most vulnerable. In and through both, God is glorified, and all creation can begin to experience the shalom for which we were created.

For more information on the MDGs and the Church's response

Helpful books include Sabina Alkire and Edmund Newell's *What Can One Person Do?* (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 2005). Online resources include:

- The “One Episcopalian” initiative, <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn>
- Episcopal Relief and Development, <http://www.er-d.org>
- Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation, <http://www.e4gr.org>
- The United Nations, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

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