

New Hope

This pastoral letter of Bishop Paul V. Marshall was read in churches of the Diocese of Bethlehem

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

During the next two weeks you will be hearing from lay people and your clergy about your invitation to join with the rest of the parishes in the diocese in our *New Hope* Campaign. This effort will allow us to assist our sister diocese of Kajo-Keji in rebuilding its schools, and will also allow us to seed social ministry projects in our own parishes, starting with a homeless shelter in Scranton.

I was describing my enthusiasm for and commitment to the *New Hope* campaign recently and someone said to me, “Well, of course, that’s your job.” The fact is, it isn’t my job, but it is my passion. I could very well have continued through to retirement without making this effort. My transformation in this matter has required the re-ordering of my personal and professional priorities. My own financial commitment to the project means, among other things, that I will need to postpone my planned retirement date by two years and that we will have altered our standard of living. That is how seriously we take this effort at our house.

My experience of Africa, and the faith and commitment of our World Mission committee have given me passion about Sudan. My involvement with many of our parishes that are determined to make a difference in their communities (and I think particularly of a very moving experience I had at Good Shepherd, Scranton) has convinced me that, even in a land rich in government programs, there are still many poor whom we are called to serve directly.

This project has become part of our common life. You have been reading the details of our program in *Diocesan Life* for many months now. Some of you have seen the presentations Diana and I made or one of those given by members of World Mission. Some of you know

that the Episcopal Church Women have made an extraordinary effort to support the efforts of the Sudanese to become self-sufficient.

I do not wish to steal the thunder from the speakers you will hear in the next two weeks, but I will address the issue of accountability now. Accountability and transparency are key issues when sending money to the Third World. The news here is very good. The new bishop of Kajo-Keji, Bishop Anthony Poggo, has an MBA from Oxford, and is entirely in synch with our financial reporting requirements and has added some of his own. In addition to having our own manager on the ground during the construction time, two members of our diocese will be making quarterly inspection trips. Moneys will be administered here from our Diocesan Trust, on a pay-as-you-go basis.

The good news is that during the summer we have received gifts and pledges of half of our goal of \$3.6 million. Now we are in the larger phase of the campaign, and I ask you to join me in making a truly sacrificial gift to this work. You can target your gift for Pennsylvania or Sudan if that's what you hear God saying to you in particular.

You can adopt specific projects. For example: \$100,000 will establish the homeless shelter in Scranton; \$25,000 builds a school in Kajo-Keji; \$5,000, a classroom. If you like, gifts can be designated as memorials, and the Sudanese are very good about erecting memorial plaques or markers.

We can pay our pledges over a five-year period, on a weekly, monthly, or annual schedule.

I close by recalling that there is something in this project for us.

First, when we share a vision and work for it together, God creates community that transcends other issues that tend to divide or irritate us. The "Anglican Communion" means many things to many people – here we see communion in its essence, relationship in Christ enacted for the common good.

Second, there is the fact, proven over and over in our diocese and elsewhere, that participation in a capital fund drive *increases* regular pledging because people know themselves to be committed to something important.

Last and most important, when we give sacrificially, we participate in Christ's own self-emptying. In doing so we are changed, individually and corporately, more and more into his likeness.

Please keep this ministry in your prayers. God be with you as you seek to know how you are called to minister to those who need New Hope.

Faithfully,

+Paul