

Mission and generosity mark 2005 outreach at Clarks Summit parish

By Bill Lewellis, *Communication Minister, Diocese of Bethlehem*

Based on information provided by the Church of the Epiphany, Clarks Summit, in the Diocese of Bethlehem.

The AGAPE Fund

Supported by gifts and memorial contributions, mainly from parishioners, the AGAPE committee of the Church of the Epiphany, Glenburn/Clarks Summit, was able to provide a total of \$7,925 in grant assistance during 2005 to nine persons or families as well as \$300 to assist organizations.

A note in the committee's 2005 annual report, submitted by chairperson Joseph L. Skinner, asked parishioners to contact any member of the committee or the interim rector if they were aware of someone in need who might be helped through the fund. "All we ask is a small amount of non intrusive background information to assist us in our decision making process. All requests, grants, and information are kept in the strictest confidence."

The fund's purpose, as stated in the report, is "to assist those of our parish, yet not restricted to only those of our parish, who may find themselves in need of financial assistance. AGAPE assistance may be of an emergency nature or it may be long term."

Christian Outreach Committee

During 2005, the Christian Outreach Committee of the Church of the Epiphany, Clarks Summit, allocated \$21,000, in international (\$13,550), national (\$3,700) and regional (\$3,750) grants.

Some 25 years ago, the committee's 2005 annual report, submitted by committee chair Bob Lewis, indicates that a bequest by Joseph and Grace Rothwell left 80 acres of property on Gravel Pond Road to the church. The property was sold for \$125,178. An ad hoc committee determined that the bequest be used to establish the Epiphany Memorial Trust Fund.

Since that time, almost \$350,000 has been given away "to worthy projects to do Christ's work."

The Christian Outreach Committee, according to its mission statement, "seeks to support a balanced portfolio of regional, national, and global projects that help meet people's physical and spiritual needs, thereby empowering them to serve Christ in the world."

Remaining open to any initiative that supports the church's Christian Mission, the Committee favors projects that (1) seek to provide long term value rather than short term immediate benefit, (2) are start-up in nature or designed to establish new frontiers for existing programs, and (3) are in need of funding for direct benefit rather than administrative expenses.

These were the specific disbursement during 2005:

\$5,000, granted to Charles Pinches on behalf of Reaching the Pygmies Ministry in Uganda.

\$800, granted to Jordan Pinches to defray 50% of his airfare cost to travel to work with the Pygmies in Uganda.

\$800, granted to Steve Azaravich to defray 50% of his airfare cost to travel to work with the Pygmies in Uganda.

\$1,000, to the Rev. Nancy Walton for the Outreach program of St. Andrews Church in Belize, West Indies.

\$2,000, to The Episcopal Relief Fund for South Asian Tsunami Relief.

\$1,000, to The Episcopal Relief Fund for U.S. Hurricane Relief.

\$250, granted to Dr. Linda Rogers for expense to attend the "Consultation for Theological Education."

\$1,200, granted to Father Fred Tumusiime to aid in his purchase of an automobile to visit his parishioners in Uganda.

\$2,750 granted to Dan Fitzgerald, Wycliffe Bible Translators for recording equipment and distribution of Old Testament narratives to the Baka people of Cameroon, Africa.

\$750, granted to First Baptist Church of Abington to help with structural repairs to their church.

\$1,000, granted to the Women's Resource Center for aid to victims of domestic and sexual assault.

\$750, granted to the Abington Youth Center

\$1,000, granted to New Hope Academy to assist in their ministries to hurting boys and their families.

\$2,700, granted to the Appalachian Service Project for building materials and expenses for the teams who will give their services in 2006.

Pygmy Ministry in Uganda

2005 Report by Charles Pinches

The Pygmy ministry in Uganda continues to be a vital part of our church's mission in the world. In 2005, contact with our friends in Uganda was relatively frequent.

We received Father Charles Busingye and Father Fred Tumusiime as visitors in April. Their visit helped raise funds, not only locally but in Ohio, Louisiana and New York where the men visited other churches.

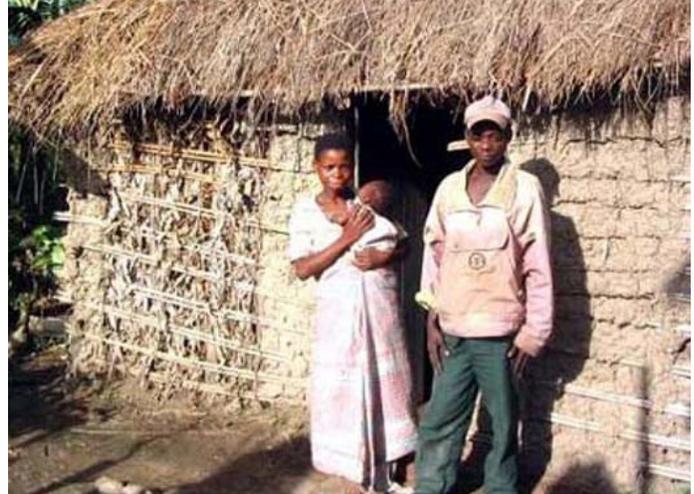
In May and June of this year three missionaries from our parish traveled to Uganda: Wayne Divis, Jody Pinches and Charlie Pinches. They were joined by Steve Azaravich, a pre-med student from Pittston who did medical work with Dr. Kellermann in our region in southwest Uganda.

Highlights of the trip included groundbreaking for the McMahan clinic and a week of mission work at Epiphany School building desks, painting classrooms and taking pictures of all the students.

Epiphany School [in Uganda] grows each year as a new class is added. We now have 118 students in four grades. Plans call for continued expansion for three more years and the required seven primary grades are filled.

Sponsorship continues to lag far behind the numbers of students in the school, leaving a consistent budget shortfall. Supplements to the sponsorship income are provided by fund raising trips by Fathers. Charles and Fred, a Christmas drive and continued support from the Christian Outreach Committee fund. Other churches such as the church of the Ascension in Louisiana

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have also taken initiative on onetime projects such as the recent two-room classroom addition which was completed this summer.

Population in the Pygmy Resettlement remains fairly steady. There was one birth in this past year. Some of the Pygmies have learned the basic skills of farming quite well and crop yield has increased for them. Others continue to struggle as their hand-to-mouth habits formed in their earlier forest culture remain with them.

They continue to face sickness, especially malaria; although attention at the school to medical needs has raised the health of the population somewhat, and severe cases have received treatment at Dr. Kellermann's hospital 20 miles away.

\$80,000 for hurricane relief

The Church of the Epiphany, Clarks Summit, recently sent a check for \$72,264 to Episcopal Relief and Development to be used for hurricanes Katrina and Rita disaster relief and redevelopment. That brought the financial support from this parish for disaster relief on the Gulf Coast to some \$80,000.

"People here are still excited about what we have put together to help," said

interim rector Alan Mead. "More than the money, however, a parishioner is going to be organizing a one-week mission trip sometime in the spring. He will be seeking others from the parish to join him. Also, our Senior High youth are planning their June mission trip to go there to work. They have already had a fundraiser and raised quite a bit towards the trip. My hope is that we can connect with one of the stricken dioceses or a larger parish that will still be actively working on some kind of rebuilding project by then where our teens can receive from the Episcopal Church there as well as give."

On behalf of the parish, Father Mead, sent the following letter to Episcopal Relief and Development.

After Hurricane Katrina, The Church of the Epiphany Christian Outreach Committee sent an immediate check for \$1,000 to Episcopal Relief and Development.

Then, at our next Vestry meeting, we discussed a larger response involving the entire parish. After lively discussion it was voted to issue a challenge to the parish by matching each gift of \$1.00 for Hurricane Katrina and Rita relief with an additional \$3.00 from endowment funds.

Some mentioned that they had already given gifts to both ERD and also to the

Red Cross and asked if those could be matched after the fact. The generous response of our parish Vestry was yes.

I am quite simply in awe at the generous response to this challenge.

The Vestry set a goal of \$80,000 for a total gift and actually that figure (minus what was given previous to the challenge) was met! This is a parish that is mission minded and where sacrifice of self for others is more than a phrase.

Our youth are also participating and are planning a mission trip in June to help in an appropriate way and to learn firsthand about disaster and to participate in the response of those who care and to see for themselves what a difference it makes.

The Church of the Epiphany, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, in the Diocese of Bethlehem, is not particularly large and has a modest endowment that was used to make this challenge and gift possible. This gift represents this parish's willingness to sacrifice from their endowment. It also, considering our size, represents significant sacrificial giving on the part of our parishioners.

I would add that our parish and Diocese, the Diocese of Bethlehem, with Bishop Paul Marshall's leadership, have been growing in putting mission and sacrificial giving for mission as a priority. Generous and sacrificial response to human need is a growing reality in this diocese. I am hopeful that our example of finding a way to increase and inspire sacrificial giving may be an example to others.

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