

The United Methodist Church is leading the way on a campaign to save lives and now during “March Madness” it is our turn to take it to the net. OK....so we are not all great basketball players and in fact I am not even talking about basketball. I am talking about malaria nets.

Malaria is preventable, but infects nearly 500 million people each year and kills more than one million of those who become infected. Ninety percent of deaths caused by malaria occur in Africa where the disease is a leading killer of children. Every 30 seconds a child dies from malaria. Children who are able to survive the disease are faced with physical and mental impairments, such as poor growth and development.

Moreover, every day 25 million pregnant African women risk severe illness and harm to their unborn children from a malaria infection. Malaria contributes to low birth weight among newborn infants, one of the leading risk factors for infant mortality.

Malaria incapacitates people and keeps them from working while they recover or take care of sick children. Malaria keeps countries poor. In addition to the burden on the health system, malaria illness and death cost Africa \$12 billion a year in lost productivity.

“Nothing But Nets” is a global, grassroots campaign to save lives by preventing malaria, a leading killer of children in Africa. Inspired by Sports Illustrated columnist Rick Reilly, thousands of people have joined the campaign that was created by the United Nations Foundation. Founding campaign partners include The People of the United Methodist Church, the National Basketball Association’s NBA Cares, and Sports Illustrated. Other partners include VH1, the Mark J. Gordon Foundation, AOL Black Voices, Rotarians’ Action Group on Malaria, the Wasserman Foundation, and Major League Soccer’s MLS W.O.R.K.S.

Every \$10 donation to “Nothing But Nets” goes directly toward the purchase, distribution, and education about the proper use of an insecticide-treated bed net. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will match your donation, net for net. Bed nets work in two ways. They stop mosquitoes from biting during the night and spreading the disease, and the insecticide on the net kills the mosquitoes when they land on it, stopping them from flying on to find their next victim. Bed nets can prevent malaria transmission by 50 percent, and they are distributed through the Measles Initiative—a partnership of the United Nations Foundation, American Red Cross, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization, UNICEF, and local country governments and ministries of health.

We have organized locally through a church taskforce that includes Taylor Edmonds, Jan Thompson, Jason Meisenheimer, Karen Ebert, Dave Killmer and myself. Taylor has written a great letter to the editor of the Nevada Daily Mail explaining why he is involved. If Taylor’s letter has not already run in the local paper I hope that it will very shortly. Dave is working on a press release, Jason is getting Taylor scheduled to talk with local service groups, Karen and Jan are doing a bulletin board display at the church and preparing for our own special “Net Sunday” offering. I have set up a local webpage linked off our own website for more information and I am contacting the other churches in Nevada. You can visit www.umcn.info/nets/ for information and video about the campaign.

The United Methodist Church is leading the way as a founding partner of “Nothing But Nets” and brings 160 years of experience in health ministries to the remote regions of the African continent. It is appropriate that as United Methodists we should lead the way so to this end the Sending Team has set Sunday, April 6th as “Net Sunday” here at the church. I hope that you will plan to make a contribution to “Nothing But Nets” that day. You can make out your check to the United Methodist Church and simply write Nets on the memo line. Remember \$10 saves a life....a small price to pay for a life!

Pastor Ralph