



Message from the Director



Greetings Partners in Ministry!

*O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
till the storms of destruction pass by.*

– Psalm 57:1

This year, these words have had special meaning for the Missions and those we serve. Last January, a powerful EF3 level tornado ripped through Selma, shredding buildings, destroying roofs, uprooting trees, and hurling them into cars and houses.

Just minutes after the storm passed, our incredible Missions team sprang into action. They put their own concerns aside and hit the streets to help our neighbors who were still reeling from the shock of what had just happened.

It would be days until power could be fully restored, so they made sandwiches in the dark and passed them out from tables they set up on the street in front of the Bosco Nutrition Center. The gas stoves still worked, so they grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, and cooked meals by candlelight to serve from the doors of Bosco. They made certain that nobody – especially the terrified children – went away hungry.

All that happened on just the first day. Because there's so much poverty here, the rebuilding has been agonizingly slow. The storm destroyed many businesses and jobs that will never come back. We still have a long way to go.

But God has sent our community a tremendous blessing: you.

From the moment news of the destruction began to spread, you and your fellow donors responded – and have continued to respond – with generous hearts and spirits.

It's been one of the most challenging years anyone can remember. But for every tear of sorrow that's been shed, there's also been a tear of joy and gratitude for the love you've shown to people in their most desperate hours.

Even as we continue to deal with the aftermath of the tornado, daily life goes on. In the Deep South that means the poor still need food, shelter, emergency help, and a realistic path out of poverty. These are the things you provide every day.

In this newsletter, I'll tell you about just 12 of the many families and individuals whose lives you changed for the better last year. Please know that I and so many others here remember you every day in our prayers. You are a great gift to those in poverty. May God bless you and your loved ones throughout 2024 and beyond!

In Christ, I remain

Chad McEachern, Missions Director

2023 Year in Review • 2023 Year in Review • 2023 Year in Review

Reminder: We always change the names of those we help to protect their privacy.



January

2023 got off to a shocking start in the Deep South when a deadly tornado tore through downtown Selma then cut a wide swath of devastation through our neighboring counties, ultimately killing 7 people before it was done. You got involved right away helping the Missions feed the hungry, shelter those left homeless, and providing comfort and hope to those in despair. The way you responded to this crisis set the tone for the deep compassion you would show to His people in need throughout the year.

February

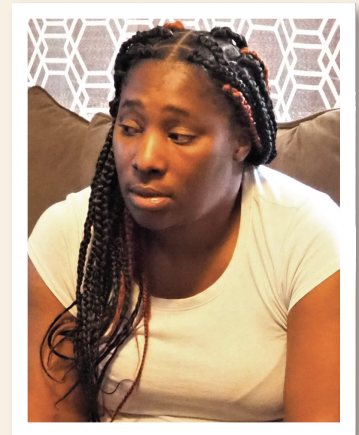
Kate Johnson was devastated when her husband died suddenly. Her shock and pain were almost unbearable, and when the funeral bills began to pile up, things got desperate. The little savings they had went quickly, but thankfully you made sure they could make it through the roughest

patch. Your kind gift allowed us help to them with their funeral bills and get back on their feet. Today they're healing and grateful to have their lives back.



March

The nation was still grappling with runaway inflation when I wrote you about my good friend Louise Carter. She and her three children were trapped by poverty in a dangerous apartment complex terrorized by crime and violence. She desperately needed to move, but her job at the dollar store paid so little she couldn't even keep up with her rapidly rising bills. Her heat had been cut off in the middle of winter and she needed urgent help. Thankfully, you saw her needs and stepped in to make a difference. Today, the family is in a nice (and safe!) apartment, and her days of living in fear are just a memory.



April

Jeannette Eldridge was just a young woman when she was diagnosed with a rare form of kidney cancer and received her kidney transplant. Then COVID swept through the Deep South.

The virus attacked her already compromised immune system and before she knew it her body was rejecting her new kidney. Medical bills had already wiped out their savings, and now she was too sick to go back to work and soon lost her job. She was on the verge of losing her home too, until you made a special Easter gift to help. Thanks to you she's been able to keep her home, catch up on her bills, and fill her pantry with groceries. She's still on the transplant list, but your support – and the knowledge that you cared enough to help her – has filled Jeannette with a new sense of hope.



May

Water damage can destroy a home fast. Especially a mobile home. And even more especially when the occupant, like my elderly friend Elizabeth Smith, has fragile health and limited mobility. When a dangerous spring storm blew off

part of her roof, water started pouring in. And as soon as the rain stopped mold started forming everywhere. Her little home was on the verge of becoming unlivable until you sent a contribution to help her. Through your generosity, we were able to repair her roof and start scrubbing the house clean of mold and mildew. Thank you for restoring, not just Elizabeth's home, but her sense of security as well!

June

Most people wouldn't live in the trailer Alyssa Compton had just bought, but she was thrilled with it. "It's so much better than the shack we were living in," she said. However, the trailer needed everything: wiring so she could have electricity, a septic tank and plumbing to the

trailer, appliances, money for utility deposits and more. You know who provided all that? You did! Thanks to your generosity, Alyssa and her two young children are settled in their home. They're just getting by on her salary as a Nursing Assistant, but they're miles ahead of where they were before you helped.

July

Lindsey Harris and his wife Carla were living modestly on the salary he earned working for a highway construction company. But when he was diagnosed with eye cancer, he missed months of work during his treatments so there was no money coming in. And when the exorbitant



medical bills began to arrive, it looked like they might lose everything he had worked for. Then you stepped in. The gift you sent to help get their medical bills under control reduced his stress so much that it actually helped him heal faster! Your love for the poor makes a difference in so many ways!



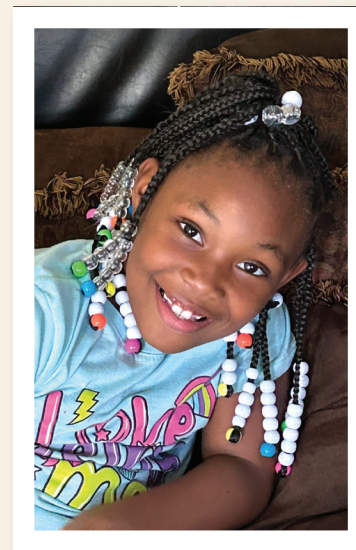
August

One reason families in poverty love back to school time is that their kids receive free breakfast and lunch every weekday. On the weekends, though, feeding everyone is still a huge challenge. That's why now, when our children leave school on Friday afternoon, we hand out free weekend *Breakfast Bags* for them to take home. Each bag contains cereal, fruit, whole grain granola bars, and fruit juice for them to enjoy on Saturday and Sunday. They're nothing fancy, but they are nutritious, and a real treat for our kids and their families. On their behalf, thank you for seeing the importance of the *Breakfast Bag* program and keeping it going year after year!

September

Last September Vera Hall endured the worst anniversary imaginable: it had been one year since her oldest son had been shot to death by a man who robbed him of just \$5. Now, the

anniversary was even more painful. Her only other son was in college in Virginia when one cold winter day he was run over by a car. It broke both his legs and severely injured his spine. Then, when she brought him home to Selma, she found a pipe had burst in the cold and flooded her home. If not for your empathy and kindness that series of catastrophes might have broken her. But your kindness helped us fix her broken pipes and ease her financial burden. Just as important, your caring gave her the will to face whatever comes next. *Thank you so much!*



October

This is Hailey Crane, daughter of my dear friend Loraine. She, and her brother Charlie have severe asthma and require oxygen and special breathing treatments. It's very expensive, but Loraine usually earns just enough at her low-paying factory job to keep things together.

Last year, though, the factory closed 4 days in a row for Thanksgiving. Losing that many days pay put her so far behind that she ran out of groceries and was in danger of having her electricity shut off. It would have been a disaster for her children! But praise God, you sent a loving gift that arrived just in time to give her the resources she needed to get through the crisis! Thank you for helping Loraine get her life back on track!



November

Patty Evans barely makes enough as a substitute teacher to raise her young sons, aged 5 and 6, but she's making sure her family will have a better life! She's in college studying to earn her degree and become a full-time

educator. Patty excels in school, but for several months last year the substitute work dried up and she couldn't make enough to keep her household going. Losing her utilities, and even eviction, seemed like real possibilities.

Thankfully, you were as impressed by her hard work and dedication as I am, so you made a wonderful gift to help her out. I'm happy to let you know that, thanks to you, she never missed a single class during those lean times, and now the substitute work has picked up again. You helped her keep her "eyes on the prize" and her family's future looks brighter than ever!

God Bless You For Caring!

December

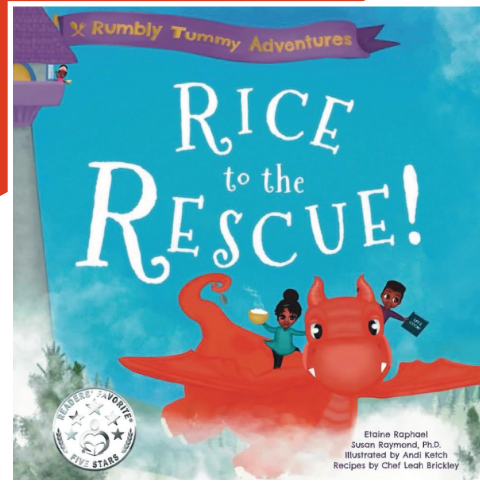
Thank you for helping me keep a solemn promise! Little Janie Blackburn (sitting on the floor while her mom, Annette, braids her hair) was terrified Santa wouldn't be able to find her house on Christmas Eve. The family's power had been cut off and their house was dark and freezing cold. So, knowing how much you care for those in need, I made a promise to Janie. "Don't you worry about that one bit," I said. "We're going to make sure Santa has no trouble finding your house." I believed in my heart that you wouldn't let this loving family spend Christmas in the dark. And, of course, you didn't! Because you put those in need at the top of your gift list, this was one of the best Christmases ever for the Blackburns!



2023 began as one of the most difficult years anyone could remember in the Deep South. The devastation of January's tornado continues to have an impact on lives in our community. Yet no matter how great the challenge, you have remained a blessing to our neighbors with the greatest needs. We at the Missions will never forget your kindness.

God bless you and yours throughout 2024 and beyond!

**Now Kids
Will WANT
to Eat Their
Veggies!**



SSE EDMUNDITE *Missions*

**Rumbly Tummy
Adventures
Take Kids on a
Magical Journey of
Learning and Fun.**

Moms and dads in poverty face the same dilemma that confronts parents from every walk of life: getting kids to eat their vegetables.

Working with renowned children's author Etaine Raphael, illustrator Andrea Ketchelmeier, and nutrition-writer Leah Brickley, Edmundite Missions staff has created a fun and exciting new series of books for young people, the ***Rumbly Tummy Adventures!***

Kids will join Nia and Shawn, a pair of elementary school children, who tell each

other stories as they walk through their neighborhood. Their tales feature princesses, knights, dragons, unicorns, and more to excite young imaginations. The theme of each story is the importance of healthy eating.

The first book in the series, ***Rice to the Rescue!*** comes with a companion Activity Book filled with adventures, mysteries to solve and games to play! Every page unlocks new challenges and teaches valuable lessons about the importance of nourishing your body with healthy foods.



Why the Rumbly Tummy Adventures Books?

- Engaging stories that spark kids imaginations
- Games and puzzles that encourage healthy eating
- Activities that empower kids to make nutritious choices
- Low-cost recipes the whole family can make together

***Unlock the joy and magic of healthy eating.
Let the adventure begin!***



**Want your own copy of Rumbly Tummy Adventures?
Use the QR code to order yours now!**

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