

Kids at Salmon Creek Dress Up Their Pastor for Imagine No Malaria

By Julia Frisbie

Ephesians 6:13-17

13 Therefore, pick up the full armor of God so that you can stand your ground on the evil day and after you have done everything possible to still stand. **14** So stand with the belt of truth around your waist, justice as your breastplate, **15** and put shoes on your feet so that you are ready to spread the good news of peace. **16** Above all, carry the shield of faith so that you can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. **17** Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word.

Sometimes the armor of God doesn't look quite like we imagine. The breastplate might be a fuzzy jumpsuit, the helmet a mosquito mask, and the shield a cardboard sign reading, "Desperate to Fight Malaria. Anything helps, God Bless!" That's what Rev. Dr. Joyce Emery of [Salmon Creek UMC](#) found herself wearing in the name of Christ last July.

It all started with an idea from Adena Manzer, the Director of Children's Ministry. She wanted to make this year's [Vacation Bible School](#) special by fundraising for [Imagine No Malaria](#). So, on the first day of Vacation Bible School, the planning team hung a bed net from the gym wall, complete with 100 [pipe cleaner mosquitos](#). They explained that they would raise money to end malaria all week long, and every child who donated \$10 would get to remove a pipe cleaner mosquito from the bed net.

But it didn't stop there: they also issued a challenge. The pastor promised the children that, if they raised \$1000 for Imagine No Malaria by the end of the week, she would dress up like a big mosquito and stand outside the local supermarket. The volunteer youth leaders, dressed as superheroes for the Vacation Bible School theme, would join her.

It was a huge hit. Everyone wanted to take down a pipe cleaner mosquito and see the pastor dress up. "By Wednesday the children had given over \$1200 and all of the mosquitos had been removed from the net," says Rev. Dr. Emery. "By the end of Friday afternoon the offering was up to

\$3,000. Needless to say, [we] spent Friday afternoon out in front of the Market with a sign saying, ASK US WHY WE ARE DRESSED LIKE THIS.”



Churches often underestimate themselves and then surpass their fundraising goals for Imagine No Malaria. And that’s thanks to their children and youth. Kids understand the message of Imagine No Malaria more easily than adults. For them, the math is simple: children are dying + we know how to stop it = we have to do something.

As the pastor and the youth group stood in front of Chuck’s Produce Market in the full armor of God, many people stopped to ask them about their outfits and their cause. That gave them a chance to tell people about the United Methodist Church’s extraordinary effort to save lives. Many community members were moved to donate. “They ended up raising another \$400,” says District Superintendent David Nieda. “What a great witness!”

What could your church do to be a witness in your community? It’s easy to start by [sharing the story with your children and youth](#). If you follow their lead, you may exceed your expectations-- and your pastor might end up costume!