

A newsletter of information, practical ideas that have worked, suggestions of how to get your folks actually “doing mission”—work trips, community projects, individual service and more.

Mission Matters



Matters

Board of Global Ministries

DECEMBER 2006

West Michigan Conference

Attention

You are receiving this copy of Mission Matters electronically only, as a result of budget cuts. It will be necessary that you copy it and hand it to your mission leaders. We need to get the mission message out and **you** are a critical link in that communication chain. Thank you.

Individuals Volunteer, Too

Often Volunteers in Mission go out in teams. However, sometimes VIMs go out in one's and two's. That's how Lynn and Kay DeMoss were in ministry in Mitchell's Plain, South Africa, for five weeks last summer. They returned to the Saamwerk Project where they worked in the winter of 2001. "Saamwerk" is Afrikaans for "working together" and that's exactly what happens twice a week in a brightly painted container in the churchyard of Wesley Methodist Mission. Mitchell's Plain is a mixed race township near Cape Town. As various industries have left South Africa to relocate in Asia, there is a 40%

unemployment rate in Mitchell's Plain and families struggle to make ends meet.

Women attend Saamwerk to learn craft skills that will supplement their income. Project directors Wilma Williams and Charlotte

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Rev. Patric Engelbrecht and Saamwerk Coordinator Wilma Williams outside the Saamwerk container that opens its doors each Monday and Wednesday.





Kayte Aspray, a United Methodist from Bay City, purchases a doll from Saamwerk Coordinator Charlotte Lenting.

Saamwerk is a place where people find many things. Johanna finds new hope: "At home I was so lonely. But at Saamwerk, I feel like a new person!" Fatima finds new skills: "I am ever ready, like a battery, to learn to sew things for my family and to sell." Denise finds new ideas: "Several of us who come to Saamwerk teach Sunday School and we share ideas with each other." And Rosie finds new purpose: "Before I retired, I was longing to join Saamwerk because I want to work for God." Most important, however, everyone in the Saamwerk family discovers new life. Empowerment is at the heart of Saamwerk.

Saamwerk is a project of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa. However, it is also an Advance Special of The United Methodist Church. The DeMosses are available to share a program about the New South Africa and Saamwerk. Contact them at 231-744-0336 or puzisha@verizon.net. Gifts to Saamwerk may be sent through the Conference Treasurer: #15146A (day-to-day operation of the craft project) or #15147C (capital needs such as sewing machines, a new container, etc.)

Lenting, are Methodist Women who have kept the project alive. The DeMosses simply added a little extra energy to the reorganization of the project: writing a business plan, applying for non-profit status and advance special status, recruiting a new steering committee, securing a second container to increase workshop space, marketing and creation of a web site.

People are at the heart of Saamwerk. Methodists work alongside Muslims, Anglicans and Apostolics. Many faith expressions are represented as women come seeking both fellowship and a little extra income. Saamwerk specializes in crafts from recycled materials. There are purses and baskets made of rolled paper; totebags made from plastic grocery sacks and ribbon woven through orange sacks. Ceramic cast-offs from the auto factory become coasters. "I was shocked when I learned I could make beautiful things from nothing!" remarks one Saamwerk regular.

Saamwerk recently celebrated a special event. They hosted a group of 22 tourists from the United States, including United Methodists from the Michigan Area. Home stays provided rich intercultural experiences. New friendships were made that will last for years and persons left with a better understanding of the New South Africa.



Johanna loves to make purses and new friends.

A Trip of a Lifetime

The Rev. Carolin Spragg, pastor of Paw Paw United Methodist Church, shares an exciting trip to Africa where she visited Paul Webster's work at Mujila Falls:

Stimulated by my father's lifelong dream to build a church and to hunt big game in Africa, my parents, Jerold and Maxine Topliff, and I celebrated significant birthday years (85 and 60 respectively) by doing a VIM trip with a safari attachment in Zambia, Africa, during the month of August. Paul Webster's Agricultural Project at Mujila Falls in the North-west Province served as gracious hosts offering amazing opportunity to encounter the Zambian people. During the two weeks at the mission the 800 chickens laid their first eggs (now averaging over 600 per day) causing great rejoicing. Work opportunities included hand-planing rough-sawn rosewood and making a cross and candlesticks (to be used in a chapel that will be built in memory of Roxanne Webster), and towel racks, toilet paper holders and a bench for the home in which Paul lives. Bare windows were given new drapes and curtains made by Maxine and me. Doing laundry in the river and carrying the clothes back up the hill on top of our heads provided insight into life Zambian style.

A training experience for pastors and lay leaders resulted in mutual learning as we talked about the sacraments, the Wesleyan concepts of grace, planning and organizing for worship and building new churches. Fifteen in attendance enjoyed some new taste experiences as Maxine prepared cookies and yogurt parfaits with fresh strawberries from the garden. We enjoyed the experience of eating goat.

The conversations that day revealed that many churches have had little opportunity for baptisms or communion as the many lay pastors have not yet been given authority to administer the sacraments. We celebrated communion using their traditional "bread of life" – nshima, a stiff corn flour substance prepared by boiling. Having offered to celebrate baptism and communion the next day at the village of Kanvama the word was sent by bicycle (no phones, no cars, no Internet). Sunday morning the crowd exceeded the space in the small "termite" brick church, so we met beneath a tree. The cross and candlesticks made at the farm adorned the altar. The pastor made a list of names as the people gathered. When the time for baptism came, 48 babies and children were presented to be baptized. Worship that day lasted two hours, and every single child was enthusiastically celebrated as they were received back by a family member from their holy moment at the baptismal water. The songs flowed forth with drums and singing and the Spirit of God touched us all.

The memory of those experiences enfolded us as we traveled on to see the wonders of God's creation – elephants, leopards, giraffes, zebras, lions, impala, baboons, hippos, rhinos, baobab trees, jacaranda trees, and so much more. In Jerold's words, "I came to go on safari and see the animals with the VIM part of the trip as a nice addition, but I leave knowing that the people of Mujila Falls will be what I remember most." God is vitally at work through our missionary, Paul Webster, in opening people's minds and hearts to the abundance that surrounds them with affordable and sustainable changes in the way they live with the land and with their goats and cattle and chickens. Paul faithfully ties all that he does in seeking to feed God's children to the extraordinary grace of the God who loves all of us.



Missionary Paul Webster's Needs/ Zambia

Paul Webster has asked for the following:

- **Bull rings** for use in oxen training (See tractor supply or Farm/Fleet stores)
- **Small syringes** (3 to 5cc) for use with rabbits and other small animals.
- **Milk filters**
- **Household needs:** chili powder, dish clothes, nutmeg, oven thermometer.
- **Garden seeds:** Swiss chard, collards, pumpkins, beans, sweet corn, radishes, carrots, green peppers, broccoli, cabbage, tomato, herbs.

Paul's mailing address is:
Mujila Falls Agriculture Centre
Rev. Paul Webster
PO Box 20219, Kitwe, Zambia

For the past 10 years, Kalkaska KAIR, an ecumenical agency, has been serving those in need in Kalkaska County in Northern Michigan. KAIR is able to be the "hands and feet of Christ" due to its large base of volunteers (largely United Methodist) and the supervision of 2 paid employees. Deb Harmon, the director of KAIR, reports that KAIR is able to return to the community in goods and services \$3.00 for every \$1.00 in donations. Last year they were able to give to the needy in Kalkaska County \$400,000. in goods and services. Each month they serve between 400-700 individuals through their food pantry and 30 families using their clothing and household goods pantry. They also serve by providing help with prescriptions, "non-permit" home repairs, heating bills,



and gas for getting to jobs and interviews. They partner with other agencies to provide financial counseling, resume writing and interview techniques. The majority of their clients are from the "working poor" with two low-income salaries in many families. They also serve several clients who have disabilities and the elderly with limited incomes and small pensions. With the high cost of gasoline and heating oil and after surveying the clients coming to the food pantry, KAIR is looking at the need to begin a Community Meals program in a neutral, non-threatening location. If you would like to join with KAIR in fighting rural poverty in Northern Michigan you can give to KAIR through Lane 6 Conference Projects of the West Michigan Conference Six Lanes of the Advance.

Mission Auction: Round One of a Good Start

The Grand Rapids District Jesus Fest/Mission Auction held in October produced mixed results. On the one hand the seventy information and sales booths generated high interest and enthusiasm. One participant exclaimed, "I never knew we had so many wonderful things happening right here on our District!" The exchange of ideas and the mission education that took place were a resounding success. Unhappily, there were insufficient items donated for auction and few enough bidders that the auction was shortened and resulted in a profit of approximately \$6,500.

But the organizing committee is unanimous in pronouncing this year's event as round number one and is raring to do it again in 2007. All are convinced that this was a learning year and round number two will be a big success. Planning for next year's mission auction is underway, making use of all that was learned from round one.

Key to the success of the 2007 Mission Auction will be the identification and recruitment of a volunteer or two from each local church who will take responsibility for their church's participation. Persons who feel called to help make next year's mission auction a resounding success should contact Darrell and Pat Proctor at (231) 924-4813 or via e-mail at wally2@triton.net.



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