

The Church Mouse

The Newsletter of Oxford Presbytery in the United Church of Canada

January 14, 2009

Volume 28, Issue 1

Dear friends in Oxford,

We've been thinking about you during this past holiday season and as the New Year begins, and remembering how churches and families there celebrate Christmas and New Year's. We thought you might like to know a little about how Christmas and New Year's are done here in Zambezia province of Mozambique.

Most churches in Zambezia use Christmas Day to baptize. As you celebrate the birth of Christ, each baptized one too is born anew. In the church we usually go to, they baptize in the Bons Sinais River, which on that day they call the Jordan. At Quelimane it's tidal salt water—safe from crocodiles. This year they used the immersion tank at the church of the Seventh Day Adventists, one of the strongest non-Catholic congregations of our city, the whole congregation singing non-stop as every one of the five young people was immersed, wealthier relatives and friends snapping cell-phone photos, then dancing outside, then singing non-stop parading through the bairros—the baptized ones in white, the women with a head-scarf cowl—picking routes without flooded roads, or at least with palm-trunks spread across as makeshift bridges, to their own church for another impromptu dance, and Christmas communion. People ran out of houses to greet us, and share the Christmas cheer.

On December 30, to close the year and open the new one, the CCM Youth went to the homes of five particularly afflicted children that they had met during their volunteer missions this year in the poorest bairros of

Quelimane. Travelling by bicycle taxi, they brought to each a sack of foods—pasta, milk, cooking oil, juice powder, rice—foods the like of which none of these families could have afforded throughout the year. One child has leprosy, another is suffering from severe malnutrition, another is an AIDS orphan who lives with her grandmother.

Activities like these inspire and strengthen us. In 2009 may your year's work be as clearly lighted by the Spirit, and may it as clearly light up the lives of others.

In faith, *Karen and Bill Butt*

OXFORD PRESBYTERIAL UCW

47TH Annual Meeting

The Peace Within

The Power Without

Theme Speaker – Cheryl Buchner

Wednesday, January 28th, 2009

Registration 8:45am Meeting 9am - 3pm

St. Paul's United Church,

88 Bidwell Street, Tillsonburg.

WELCOME TO OXFORD PRESBYTERY

Barbara Dawson, Lay Pastoral Minister is coming to Oxford Centre/Curries the middle of January.

Rev. David Van Patter is coming to the Olde West Oxford Churches until the end of June.

(Continued from December Church Mouse)

London Conference trip to Mozambique

We gave out 150 book bags—pencils, 3 notebooks, a ruler to the very poorest of the village who could now go to school for the first time.

What was the most noticeable was the enthusiasm of students and teachers as we sat in on their lessons.
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This year we saw a few new things—we saw one home-made pull toy at a school. We saw soccer games in the city and we saw wheelbarrows in the villages that we did not see last year.

We also saw the results of the World Food Crisis. Food was in such short supply that Karen was going to have to change some of the itinerary. They could not spare food for us at any price. CCM delivered enough beans and rice to the villages to feed our group of about 20 counting the pastors, interpreters and drivers.

In spite of food shortages—there were still gifts—tomatoes, peppers, part of a bag of corn meal, a big bunch of bananas, a chicken and 2 goats—which would soon be 4 goats. Their generosity continued to be humbling.

One thing had not changed. The dedication of Bill and Karen to the work of CCM was evident everywhere we went. The girls show self-confidence, they are learning skills, they are even learning to make medicines. They sing, dance, do drama and handicrafts. Their happy faces tell me that their self esteem will make them into role models and leaders back in their own communities. Most important, they are learning to protect themselves from AIDS.

I can't end without commenting on 2 people in particular. They are Senora Fausta—whom I described at our farewell dinner as "a very classy lady" and Senor Chambule.. Chambule and I bonded. We developed a strong respect for each other. He was an excellent interpreter. He answered my questions. When we left he and I shared the longest hug that I ever recall having with any man ever. When he asked if I'd come again next year, it was the hardest thing I had to do but I had to be honest. It was unlikely that I'd ever be back. It was just too expensive. He said.." Then I'll see you in Heaven"

He is one course away from a university degree. He has no plans to abandon his people. He loves CCM. They do good work. They just need some financial

help from us to make things better for their people. He and Fausta are the future, when Bill and Karen come home.

Chambule has one dream. He'd love to find a way to come to Western to get a Master's Degree. I'm going to leave that in Bill's hands. Bill has the contacts at UWO.

As a result of our conversation as among our group of 10 and the Butts we were able to make recommendations to enhance the list of alternative gifts available in The Christmas Book of Hope. We have added items which include wheelbarrows, the Medicinal garden, watering can, hoe, school desk and mattresses etc.

I might add that after speaking at Calvary United in London we have an offer of 300 used bicycles for Mozambique. I have queries out to some contacts, to figure out the cheapest way to make this happen. Open to suggestions.

In summary, here are my observations.

1. No one got sick because we were careful of food and water and carried handwipes to clean our hands after every visit. (Every visit meant multiple handshakes.)
2. No one got hurt although we walked some rough terrain.
3. We had no vehicle accidents over our 2400km tour.
4. We had one minor vehicle breakdown which slowed us down until a replacement vehicle came to meet us. A cell phone is essential.
5. We came in under budget by approx. \$100 per person and a portion of this was donated to CCM by our group. Documentation was provided to London Conference for all monies spent on behalf of the group.
6. All of the donated money raised by Bruce on his speaking tour was fully documented and forwarded to London Conference for receipting purposes.. I asked that even \$10 donations be receipted for my protection.
7. Sherri Coleman at Ellison Travel did an excellent job for us, including arranging the extra excursions for 4 of our people who extended the trip. The only frustrating feature was the last in-land flight.

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It only became secure when Titos got involved in Maputo. This had to be settled before we left so that there were no surprises upon arrival that would wreck our tight budget.

8. The site hosts expected "Pastor" Bruce to bring greetings at every location. This he did with pleasure. Then, thank you speeches and prayers, when required were shared among all participants. The 2 pastors in our group did have to accept a bigger portion of these duties.

9. We all came home humbled by their generosity, enlightened by the experiences and eager to share our adventure at every opportunity in our own communities.

Let me conclude by going back to our mandate. We went to Mozambique to learn, rather than to build a project. We are now duty bound to spread what we have learned. I leave you with this promise. There are 10 capable people spread around among your various communities who are just waiting for an invitation to share their story in your pulpits or in your mens clubs or your UCW. Do give them a call.

Bruce & Margaret Whitmore

Licensed Lay Worship Leader Program will not be offered in January due to low enrollment, but will be offered at a later date. We will keep you posted. School for Christian Studies

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**Summer Staff Needed at Future Quest
August 1 - August 24, 2009**

Future Quest is a Summer Experience for Youth age 14-17 at Queen's Theological College. If you have completed one year of university or college, please consider working with Future Quest this summer! **Apply by February 15, 2009.**

Preference is given to applicants with experience working with youth, camping experience or water safety certification of bronze medallion or higher.

For information about the program and how to apply go to:
www.futurequest.ca

Questions: Call Barb Adle, Coordinator at 613-533-6690 Page 3.

CAMP TANNER DINNER & AUCTION

February 14, 2009 viewing 5:30pm

Embro/West Zorra Community Centre

Dinner 6:30pm \$16.00 each

Auctioneer – Roger McKay

Donated items and services gratefully received – Call Sheila 519-3492768

or Sandra 519-475-4833 to let them know what you can supply.

25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction www.25in5.ca

We enter 2009 with the Christmas carols still ringing in our ears – but the work of Christmas begins – again! In early December, our provincial government turned the corner from a decade of poor bashing and released a poverty reduction strategy for Ontario (health.gov.on.ca/english/public/updates/archives/hu_08/poverty_reduction_20080506.pdf.) This is a critical time for visionary and creative leadership – from all levels of government. "Ontario is on track to becoming a leader in poverty reduction in a plan that is not only crucial to the province's economic recovery but is also the right thing to do", says the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. (25in5.ca/December4_Backgrounder.html for details) We have been part of it: Oxford Presbytery, London Conference and the United Church of Canada along with Operation Sharing helped keep the pressure on the Ontario government to take action now. Thank you for your support.

Poverty has a cost for every household in Ontario. In real terms, poverty costs every household in the province from \$2,299 to \$2,895 every year. ^(The Cost of Poverty, 2008) It is obvious that there is a lot more work to be done as our governments (both provincial and federal) develop budgets in today's difficult economic climate. Knowing that challenge, ISARC (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition) is planning a prayer vigil at Queen's Park during Lent. London Conference – Church in Society Committee is preparing materials for personal and congregational use. We'll keep you posted when details become available!

Ongoing support is essential for all who are finding it much more difficult this January to eat, stay warm because of inadequate dress or shelter. Reach out; reach up; reach deep within as you respond.

Marg Murray

OXFORD PRESBYTERY CHURCH MOUSE

We are starting the 28th year since the Church Mouse was first published, I understand it was birthed by Violet Sackrider, with the purpose of keeping all Oxford Churches in touch with each other and with Presbytery. Over the years it has featured stories about our churches, supplied by those churches. Other times each Division of Presbytery was asked to tell what their responsibilities and work is and how they are fulfilling that mandate. It may be time to again call on Divisions to record their work and duties in the Church Mouse. It is very nice to get a message from the Chairperson each month, but that is happening less frequently. Last September '07 when help was needed to get the "Mouse" printed and packaged each month, it was suggested to send it by e-mail to each church and they could print what they needed. There was to be a limited number printed for Presbytery along with ten large print copies. (This number can be increased if requested).

It seemed time to again have another survey to see if what we are doing has any value and whether it is being used. So please fill in the following survey, at least every church and as many individuals as possible. You may e-mail answers to rskillings@aol.com, talk on the phone 519-467-0187, or by mail Ruth Skillings, R. # 5, WOODSTOCK, ON N4S 7V9. Looking forward to a large response.

(a) Is sending the Church Mouse by email working satisfactorily?

(B) Is it worth while advertising your events in the Church Mouse?

(C) Are you interested in what other churches are doing?

(D) What information would be helpful? Want to know more about the workings of Presbytery? If so, what in particular?

(E) How would you suggest it be improved?

(F) How well is it being read in your church, if possible give numbers?

Thank you for your help, *Ruth*

Trustees Workshop Report

A very interesting and informative financial seminar was held on Monday January 5, 2009 at Innerkip United Church, Advertised as a "Trustees Workshop" it also touched on all Church financial areas such as treasurer and steward functions.

The meeting was organized by Oxford Presbytery and the presenter was Fred Monteith, the executive secretary of Hamilton Conference. Reverend Fred after being introduced by Reverend Maya of Innerkip launched into a two hour question and answer period format which very capably outlined the role of a trustee versus the role of a steward/treasurer. As a new trustee at Richwood United Church I left the seminar with a much better understanding of the trustee's role in a Church and the legal obligations involved.

The majority of the seminar concerned the responsibilities of a trustee and how they differ from a steward's committee/finance committee and treasurer. In general, the trustees of a Church (minimum of 3 required, maximum of 15 members) are responsible for all the real and personal property of the Church, all monies held in trust for the congregation's benefit and the long term maintenance of Church assets. A very important duty is therefore to ensure adequate insurance coverage of the Church and present such information to the congregation annually. If the congregation or Official Board decides not to accept the trustees recommendations regarding insurance then a motion must be recorded in the official minutes that attests to the insurance being at a lower level than replacement cost. The trustees, having presented the correct level of insurance to the congregation /Board have fulfilled their legal obligation.

Any monies left to a Church as a bequest from a will is another important trustee function. The trustees must make a financial report annually about the value of such monies held in trust. The investment of any bequests must be in accordance with the United Church of Canada rules. It is a good idea that the Churches have a formalized investment policy for trustees to follow for monies left in trust.

Other interesting points are as follows:

Trustees should have a minimum of one meeting per year and make an annual report at the congregational meeting.

Resignation of a trustee is only acceptable in writing and presented at the congregational meeting.

Memorial Funds that are being carried for more than one year (such as a bequest) should be under the trustees responsibility.

In a charge having two or more Churches, the registry office should be checked to see which Church's trustees are listed on the deed. If only one Church's trustees are listed, than that Church is responsible for the trusteeship of the manse.

In concluding his presentation, Reverend Fred discussed the reading resources available to the trustees. The main one is titled the "Congregational Board of Trustees Handbook" of the United Church of Canada. (latest published edition, 2004)

To summarize, the trustees main role is to be financially responsible for all the real and personal property of a Church. Good and proper communication between the trustees, Official Board and congregation is essential to the long term success of a Church. By having a few policies in place concerning insurance levels, trust fund investments, memorial funds and manse responsibility, Church business will become a lot smoother and transparent for everyone. As always, United Church Presbytery and Conference staff are available for consultation when trustees need guidance.

Brent Hutchinson Richwood United Church Presbytery representative.

Scalloped Potato and Ham Supper

Saturday, February 07, 2009

at the **Eastwood United Church**

Takeouts 4:30 pm Sit down at 5:30 pm

\$12.00 Adults \$6.00 12 & under 5yrs free

For tickets call Chris at 519-469-3838