

## New York Annual Conference Volunteer in Mission Trip to Mozambique, Africa August 2013

In the next few pages I will share with you the major accomplishments, joys and surprises of the New York Annual Conference 2013 Mozambique Connection Volunteer in Mission trip. My hope is that you will be inspired to: join us on our next trip, join the mission by sending a contribution, invite one of us to your church or other organization to share the story, or just enjoy the pictures and feel touched by friends on the other side of the world.

### **The Gondola Training Center**

When we arrived at the Gondola Training Center site we were greeted with song by members of the Gondola United Methodist Church. A tour of the facility included the large dining hall, the parsonage for the director of the center, the classrooms and dormitories, the bathrooms, the manual water pump that provides water for the center and the people in the surrounding area, the beginnings of a pig pen, and surrounding gardens.



Later in the week we planted 12 fruit trees which should be producing fruit within a few years.



The purpose of the Gondola Training Center is to equip local pastors and laity to be able to open many new churches for the growing number of new Christians in Mozambique. It is also a center for community groups to learn helpful skills in many secular areas. Although there are grand plans for additional buildings, the basic structures needed to open the center are in place. Future steps include an additional well to facilitate indoor plumbing, kitchen appliances, electricity, staff, and of course the participants to be trained. Rev. Torres, director of the Gondola Training Center, presented us with a proposal of \$88,842.00 to fund the opening. This was more than we could ever hope to raise. The Missouri conference has more funding available than our New York Conference, but even they could not support



Dining Hall



Director's House



Classrooms

the entire project. As we sat around the table in the parsonage, Enid suggested we look at a plan to begin with a small workshop to train participants in agricultural best practice. People could use the information to plant gardens to raise funds for local churches, feed the poor and improve their own diets. It would be easier to solicit funds from secular groups in the US if the workshop was about agriculture or health instead of a religious nature. Because the training center has a dual role of sacred and secular workshops, the agricultural workshop fit well with the Mozambican vision. We gave Rev. Torres the challenge to lower the budget from \$88,842.00 to \$15,000.00 or under, after which I would approach Missouri's Mozambique Initiative and/or others to add to the New York Conference's Mozambique Connection funding. Since our August trip, Rev. Torres and I have worked many hours to refine the plan so that, although participants will live as many in rural villages live, they would be able to use the center as soon as funds were available.



Cooks will use charcoal stoves instead of an electric stove, water will be brought from the well and be dispensed from a large tank instead of running water, participants will carry their chair with them from their dorm room to the dining room and classrooms, the workshop will be two weeks instead of three months, and battery lamps will be used instead of wired electricity.



Even with these limitations, the Gondola Training Center will be able to begin workshops to benefit the local community and the church. As we got closer to the \$15,000 cost goal, Rev. Torres suggested we aim for a November 2013 start date so that we would not miss this year's growing season. It would be difficult to raise the funds that quickly, but with help from the Mozambique



Initiative of Missouri, the dream became reality. Rev. Torres is now enrolling the 12 participants for the first workshop. God is good!!

### **The Bishop's Parsonage and Conference Center**

A previous project of the New York Annual Conference is the Beira Bishop's Parsonage and Conference Center. The purpose of this facility is to provide housing for district superintendents, several of whom needed to travel two days to attend a meeting. It would also provide a place for the Bishop to stay when she was in the Mozambique North Conference. It would provide visibility to have the Bishop stay in the north more often and for longer periods of time. The dormitory rooms will also be available for mission teams of all religious denominations to stay for a small fee.



We thought we had left enough funds for its completion two years ago, but Pastor Jacob showed us how much still needs to be done. A government inspection revealed that the stucco had been improperly applied and needed to be removed. This has now been completed but the funds to do this drained the account so that the other government requirements will need to wait. Several Beira churches donated funds to keep the project moving but the progress is slow. Beira also needs furniture and kitchen supplies. To make the center safe for foreign visitors like ourselves, a fence needs to be installed and guards hired. A helping hand is needed for this facility to open. Once it does, it will be a source of funds for the church.

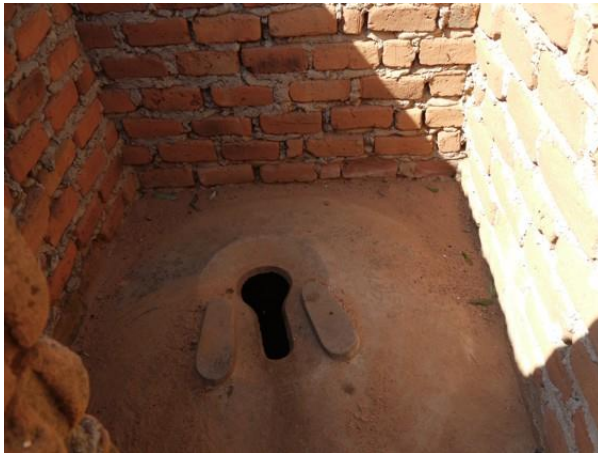
### **The Habitat for Humanity Orphanage in Chimoio**

This was one of the surprises on our trip. I asked to see this site before we left for Africa but did not realize that we would be visiting a form of orphanage. Habitat for Humanity International supported a project that built several three room brick houses for ladies in their fifties and sixties who were each caring for three or four



children. These women were without families for various reasons and were grateful for the opportunity to live in the homes, raise their own food and share it with the orphans. There is a well for water but no electricity. Brick out-houses bring a measure of sanitation to the community. Orphans return to this community as youth or even sometimes as adults. It is considered their home. We learned more about this program when we met with Rev. Macilau, a United Methodist pastor, who is now the administrator of this and several other projects. He and his staff wrote an award winning proposal to change the way orphans are cared for. They designed a program that utilizes foster care instead of isolating orphans in orphanages. In a

family setting orphans have role models of adults they can emulate in their own families when they become adults. In the future this program will be used as a model for orphans throughout Mozambique.



Another program helped young women learn skills so that they did not need to rely on prostitution for a living.

### Recipe exchange

Cynthia brought along several recipes to share with the ladies in the church. They in turn showed us how to make matapa, a spinach like dish made with coconut milk. We got to try the large mortar and pestle tool to grind the cassava leaves that are used in the matapa. We also found out how hard it is to bend over a charcoal stove for hours to cook. It was a real bonding experience.





### **Vacation Bible School**

Enid led a morning long Bible study for the children of the Gondola Church.



When we passed out pictures of the Bible story and crayons, the children just sat there. We soon realized that they had never had crayons or colored before. After a short demonstration, they enjoyed this first time experience.

### **Visiting Village Homes**

We asked our hosts to show us some of the homes in the village. It was a life changing experience. Homes were tidy but very sparse. Suitcases that we in the US would discard, in Mozambique, were used as dressers to store clothes or other household items. Chairs were brought out for us as the families sat on mats on the ground.





A woman with cancer was thrilled to have a visit from her pastor. She sang and danced for us. Her family had died and she was alone except for her church family. She had been to the clinic for the large open sore on her face that she covered with a white cloth, but they could not do any more for her.



It was good to see that families were using the mosquito nets given them by Imagine No Malaria. They were proud of their homes and glad to show them to us.

### The Chimoio Hospital



Medicines were few with long lines to receive them. Patients could go to a doctor in town and receive faster treatment with more attention, but then they needed to pay a fee. Often one saw the same doctors who worked at the public hospital where he/she could receive treatment for free. Medicines, if they had them, were also low cost or free at the hospital. Each time we go Mozambique, the hospitals seem better equipped and cleaner, but the wait times are still very long. Often patients wait all day only to be told to come back tomorrow and wait again. The hospital staff was very grateful for the latex gloves Enid brought to donate.



It is common to see young children caring for even younger ones.



Also common are trucks, called chappas, full of people. On the rough roads this can be dangerous as people fall out when the truck dips into a large hole. Although, when given the choice of walking many miles or riding in the back of a crowded truck, most choose to ride.



This is the road outside the Chimoio parsonage. Children everywhere in the world play and smile.



John had a prayerful moment at the location where, on a previous trip, he dispersed Thomas' ashes into the Indian Ocean. Thomas was a previous youth volunteer in mission, who wanted to become a pastor and return to Mozambique as a missionary. We all miss Thomas.



### **Pierina's Wedding**

Rev. Julio Vilanculos is looking fine as he attends the wedding of Pierina. Julio is our doctoral scholarship recipient and will be graduating next April. He will be one of three doctors needed for the future University in Cambine to become accredited. By having a university in Mozambique, pastors will no longer need to go to expensive Africa University in Zimbabwe to receive a degree allowing them to become elders in the church. Julio now heads the Cambine Bible School in Cambine.



Women sang to the bride and groom during the wedding service before presenting their gifts.





Pierina and her new husband Paulo



Church members prepared the biggest pot luck supper I ever saw.

### **Cynthia Giving a Sunday Message**

Cynthia prays after she gives the message at an outdoor Sunday service held at a local church member's house.



The week we were there the church met in classes as they prepared for Thanksgiving, the church's largest fund raiser that was to be held in two weeks. On Thanksgiving members bring produce they grew, live chickens and goats, and other items. After church all is sold with the proceeds going to the church.



After the service the pastor of the Central Church brought us to see the progress on the building. We saw it about 10 years ago when there were no walls or a roof – just the outline of what was to come. This church is being built with almost no help from outside funding. The parishioners are proud that they could support the construction themselves, even though it has taken 10 years so far and they have a ways to go until the building is completed.

#### **In Conclusion**

I have often been asked why I go so far to be in mission. My answer is: “The Great Commission calls us to make disciples of all nations, not just the ones most convenient, close by or least expensive.”

Our mission in Mozambique is one with the vision to empower the United Methodists in Mozambique to bring the word of Christ to their part of Africa, which is thirsting to hear that word. Our ministry of presence gives our brothers and sisters the hope that we are together in this vision. The Gondola Training Center will equip Mozambican United Methodists with the knowledge to do God’s work. The New York Times wrote several years ago that Mozambique is the Rising Star in Africa. The democratic government, although not perfect – our government is not perfect either – is trying to bring the country out of poverty. The work we do there is not giving fish but teaching people to fish. We extend a hand and rejoice with them when they reach their goals.

It is my dream that you will join me by extending your hand in Christian love and help our brothers and sisters in Christ to reach their goals of feeding the hungry, bringing clean water to those who are thirsty, welcoming strangers to know Christ, giving clothes and hope to those afflicted with AIDS, and helping those who see prostitution as their only source of income to learn the skills needed to support themselves.

If you feel moved to contribute to the projects of the New York Annual Conference’s Mozambique Connection, you can do so by clicking the link below and either use your credit card or PayPal account.

[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=DZ9QPQLJS55E4](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted_button_id=DZ9QPQLJS55E4)

If you would like to send a check, please make it out to The United Methodist Frontier Foundation and send it to me at:

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Mozambique Connection Co-chair

Thank you for your generosity to one of the poorest countries in the world, and many thanks to those who have already contributed.





Together in mission,

The 2013 Volunteer in Mission Team with Rev. Torres and the cross John made to give to the Training Center  
Enid Watson, Rev. Hilario Torres, Cynthia Johnson, Annette Griffith, John Olszewski