



Year Plan Update

Presbytery of Denver

Volume 3, No. 3 May 2010

FIVE YEARS AGO . . .

Five years ago this August the voice of Jonah Masaka, the Moderator of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe, filled the Presbytery Assembly that was meeting in Idaho Springs. As we signed the first Memorandum of Understanding forming our partnership with the Presbytery of Zimbabwe, we spoke with Jonah by speaker phone connection. It was, without question, a high moment for the Presbytery of Denver. In June of the same year five members of Denver Presbytery had traveled to Zimbabwe to begin the official discussions that would lead to the partnership between our two presbyteries. The result of that journey was the Presbytery of Zimbabwe's approving the same Memorandum that Denver signed in August, 2005.

Of course, the roots of the partnership are found in a time many years before 2005. It began with the call of Roberta and Ralph Pippitt and the Session of New Hope Church to form the Zimbabwe Mission Partnership (ZMP) that began addressing the needs of one specific rural area. Today 11 churches of Denver Presbytery join together in the ZMP to meet needs of education and orphan care in that area northeast of Harare.

A larger vision of connection began to develop, however. It was a vision that led initially to meetings with leaders of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to see how a partnership between the two presbyteries could be formed. It was a vision that would be created not on mission, not on need or response to need; rather, this partnership would be based on our mutual commitment to Christ and to being partners who would support and learn from one another. Through the partnership, the hope was expressed that both presbyteries might grow in our understandings of the church, our abilities to be the church and our commitment to Christ.

Communication then began with leaders in Zimbabwe Presbytery, especially with the Rev. Max Chigwida, a former moderator of both the presbytery of Zimbabwe and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, that asked if such a relationship might be possible. With Max's positive response to Denver Presbytery's request, more correspondence began. In 2004 three members of Zimbabwe Presbytery, the

Revs. Paul Neshangwe, Wilbert Sayimani, and Max Chigwida accepted an invitation from the Presbytery Council to visit Denver and begin exploratory discussions about partnership. Two weeks of sharing, learning and praying together concluded with their hope that we could go forward in forming an official relationship between the two presbyteries and their invitation for the Presbytery of Denver to send a delegation as soon as possible to Zimbabwe.

This year we mark the fifth anniversary of that visit and the signing by both presbyteries of the Memorandum of Understanding. Both presbyteries are beginning an intense evaluation of our partnership and of the Memorandum that has shaped the presbyteries' relationship with one another. This November another delegation from Denver will travel to Zimbabwe and together with Presbyterians across Zimbabwe will discuss the accomplishments from the past, continuing needs in the present and the partnership's possibilities in the future. It is hoped that the delegates will have the opportunity to visit every region of Zimbabwe and meet with leaders of the presbytery and members of the church in all the regions of the country.

It is an important moment for both presbyteries, as we examine the way we have been able to fulfill the initial dreams of connection and relationship. It will require honest conversation, moments of forgiveness for those times we have failed to live up to shared hopes and creative and faithful dialogue about the way forward. Please pray for both of our presbyteries as we continue this time of evaluation and as we move ahead in a partnership of mutual friendship and love. And together let us celebrate the way, over the last five years, that God has brought us together in the unity of Jesus Christ!



A Gathering of Blessing
~A Summit on Zimbabwe~

THE WORK OF THE SUMMIT CONTINUES

The Zimbabwe Summit, held in Denver, October 21 -27, 2009, brought representatives of six governing bodies to discover ways to work

together to support the Presbytery of Zimbabwe and to address the mounting problems of not only the church but the whole country. At the conclusion of the Summit, the Rev. John and Mrs. Mary Miller were identified as those who would keep all participants in communication with one another and also monitor and coordinate the continuing work that began at the summit. Following retirement from serving in Scotland, the Millers served a congregation in the Presbytery of Zimbabwe. Rev. Miller is also a former Moderator of the Church of Scotland. In March the Millers provided a report of their work. They reported the following:

- December 2009—they attended the regular meeting of the Presbytery of Greenock and Paisley in the Church of Scotland to report on the summit;
- January—they e-mailed a progress report on the Summit Action Plan;
- February—Rev. Miller visited the International Secretary of the United Reformed church in England;
- March—Rev. Miller travelled to Zimbabwe to address the meeting of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe; and
- Rev. Miller has also consulted regularly with the Rev. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

In all these meetings and encounters, Rev. Miller found that “each of the partners is continuing to follow up on commitments to the Presbytery of Zimbabwe.”

PARTNERSHIP DELEGATES FOR 2010

Friday evening, May 14, the Partnership of Zimbabwe and Denver Presbyteries Committee celebrated as Reggie and Elizabeth Mudenda stepped out of the international flights gate at DIA. The Mudendas will serve as delegates from the Presbytery of Zimbabwe until the end of May. During this time they will attend meetings of various presbytery committees and projects, visit missions and mission partnerships, learn about the structure of Denver Presbytery, preach and give greetings at our churches and serve as Presbytery of Zimbabwe representatives to the Partnerships of our two presbyteries. Beginning June 1 the Mudendas will begin a time of long leave (or sabbatical), during which time they will rest, see the sights of Denver, visit our churches and church members, study, and spend time experiencing the life of the Presbytery of Denver.

The first two weeks of November a delegation from Denver will travel to Zimbabwe to serve as representatives of the partnership. The purpose of this visit will be to re-evaluate the partnership at the five year anniversary, expose new delegates to Zimbabwe and the Presbytery of Zimbabwe, visit the various regions of the Presbytery to bring greetings from the Presbytery of Denver and discuss with various groups the progress of the Summit Action Plan.

PASTOR-IN-PARTNERHIP A BRIEF REPORT

In December 2008, the Rev. Paul Neshangwe began his work as our first Pastor-in-Partnership, a clear out-growth of our mutual work and relationship with the Presbytery of Zimbabwe. At the same time his wife, Lydia, began her studies at Denver Seminary, the initial motivation to join with us in this venture. This month Paul provided a report to the Partnership of Zimbabwe and Denver Presbyteries Committee about his work with us in Denver. In the time Paul has been ministering in our midst and on the Presbytery staff he has preached in 27 congregations. Seven other churches have invited Paul, along with his family, to speak at a church event, address an education forum or consult with a Session committee. “This connection with congregations is invaluable to me because it helps by providing an opportunity to raise awareness of the Partnership between the two presbyteries,” Paul wrote. Paul has also been active in communicating and supporting the Zimbabwe Mission Partnership and the Lomagundi Clinic Mission Partnership. In addition, Paul was instrumental in encouraging the formation of the new Refugees, Asylum-seekers and Immigrants (RASI) Mission Partnership.

Soon after he arrived, Paul was part of the Africa Task Force which organized the Walking with Africans activities last August. He indicated that the week-long event was “valuable on its own, but also opened doors for engagement with other partnerships and individual congregations with interests in Africa.” Paul has also been “embraced by the Zimbabwean community in Denver as a pastor alongside others who give them guidance and pastoral care.” A concrete result of that relationship is the fact that two Zimbabwean families are now part of our churches.

A special joy has also been opportunities to connect with the African-American community in Denver. He wrote recently that he believes that we all “will do well to engage the African-American community, at least for the unique spirituality that was born out of the slavery experience.”

During June and the first of July, Paul and his family will be in Zimbabwe. A large portion of his time and work there will be for us, preparing for the November visit from Denver, evaluating the results of the Summit and partnership. Truly, whether in Denver or in Zimbabwe, whether helping our congregations become more welcoming and inclusive or reaching out to new neighbors in our area, Paul is a Pastor-in-Partnership.