

# A GREAT THING HAPPENED



Home of Hope Outreach Children receiving backpacks from sponsors



Kathy Surma cleaning teeth of Home of Hope child



Pastors Conference  
Rev. Thompson on left, first row



Steve McPherson and Keith Wilson installing water tank at Home of Hope

Zimbabwe seems an unlikely spot to have “great things happening” since this African country is facing a ruined economy, unemployment, disease, and hunger. Zimbabwe has the second lowest per capita annual income – \$324.

However, three members of Christ United Methodist Church (CUMC) in Bethel Park felt great things *were* happening at the United Methodist Mission in Nyadire, Zimbabwe, where their mission trips visited this summer. They were part of THE NYADIRE CONNECTION (TNC), a group of volunteers whose goal is to keep the services and programs at Nyadire operational during these difficult times. TNC was organized after the first mission team returned from Nyadire in 2006. Now the group is committed to a long-term relationship with the mission, working as partners, through “chabadza,” a Shona word meaning to stop and help someone already at work.

Rev. R. Duane Thompson, senior pastor at Christ United Church, Mary Beth Zollars, and Keith Wilson journeyed the 8,400 miles from Pittsburgh to Nyadire, which is located two hours from Harare, the capital. The mission is much like a college campus with a 240-bed hospital, nursing school, a school system for 1,200 students, a preschool through high school, an orphanage, a teachers’ college, church, and farm. These programs serve a wide rural population. TNC helps to keep a doctor at the hospital, sends medications and medical supplies and containers of essential items, seeks sponsors for the orphanage and orphans in neighboring schools and rural pastors, and performs needed services when mission teams visit.

“chabadza,” is a Shona word meaning to stop and help.

What is this thing called “chabadza?” Rev. Thompson defines the Shona word as “community spirit, doing what you can to help someone.” He says, “For example, when a farmer goes out to his field he takes extra hoes, because he knows that friends and neighbors may pass by and offer to help. They’ll stop what they’re doing, stop where they are going and help. “Giving ‘chabadza’ means, I will give you my time; I will give you my attention; this is good for all of us.”

He experienced many examples of chabadza during his three weeks in Nyadire. One example took place when he was walking by himself on a dirt road. He recalled, “People walk everywhere in Zimbabwe, since there are few cars and trucks, and many people walk with large bundles on their heads, some with babies carried in blankets on their backs. But those who have cars or trucks will not pass by a person who is walking. They always stop and offer a ride. Trucks and vans that were so full, another person seemingly could not fit in, stopped and offered me a ride. They kept stopping, and I kept telling them that I was just out for a walk.”

He and four other United Methodist ministers from Pittsburgh District attended a Pastors’ Conference with the rural pastors of the region. All approached the three-day conference as partners, wanting to share how each carried out ministry. They were able to talk about issues that face pastors everywhere – pastoral care, leadership, and preaching. TNC has a pastor sponsor program begun a few years ago when it was known that many rural pastors were not being paid by their

congregations. The congregations simply did not have money, most of them scrambling for food for their own families. Rev. Thompson later remarked that many Zimbabwean pastors did not have “the basic resources from which to preach or teach—no books, no commentaries, no Bible dictionaries, nothing to help them understand the Bible at a deeper level, nothing to fire the imagination.” One Zimbabwean pastor expressed her dilemma: “Would you buy food for your family or books?”

Another member of the mission team was Mary Beth Zollars, a German teacher at Chartiers Valley High School. Many of her mission teammates remark that Mary Beth, “is really in her element” when she in Nyadire. Her month-long visit to the mission was her fifth trip there, having being “hooked after that original 2006 visit.” She felt a calling to help with the Home of Hope Orphanage (HOH) and has since coordinated a sponsorship program for the 25 orphans who live there. Sponsors pay \$30 monthly to provide food, clothing, housing, medical care, and school fees for the children. They also correspond with the child, send small gifts, and maintain a relationship. **For HOH information, e-mail mbzollars@aol.com.**

During a subsequent trip in 2007, another need became apparent to Mary Beth: the many, many orphans in neighboring rural schools. One fourth of Zimbabwean children are orphaned and live with extended family or on their own, sometimes caring for younger siblings. Most have no means to pay school fees.

Over 200 children were identified and had their photos taken in July 2007. They became the first to be sponsored for their school fees (\$60) and a backpack of school supplies. This

# ON MY TRIP TO ZIMBABWE



Mission team at rural school signing up taking individual photos orphans in hopes of being sponsored

Children of Home of Hope Orphanage atop an elephant and helping in their garden

summer, over 500 children from five rural schools had up-to-date photos taken in the hopes sponsors will be found enabling them to go to school.

Rev. Thompson took photos of orphans at the schools. He recalls, "Education is absolutely critical to the future of the children, critical to the nation. As I was taking pictures, there were these two 11-year-old girls who were sitting by themselves, and we weren't sure they qualified for the program. They started looking at me, and I started looking at them, and I took their pictures, and they would smile and giggle, just like 11-year-olds here, then ham it up. By the time we were finished, I said that I wanted to sponsor those two girls. I want to make sure that they can stay in school. You can't save everybody but perhaps you can save one or two." **For the Home of Hope Outreach School Sponsorship Program, e-mail [mbzollars@aol.com](mailto:mbzollars@aol.com).**

Bethel Park resident Keith Wilson made his first trip to Zimbabwe in July. Keith has been involved with The Nyadire Connection for quite some time and is a sponsor of Lovemore, a promising young man at the Home of Hope. One of the goals of his mission team was to hold a Vacation Bible School. With the help of some of the Nyadire Primary School, the team taught the children about the creativity in God's plan that is found all around them. They also did crafts, played games, sang songs, and held a performance for parents/guardians.

The team also worked on several physical improvements that had been identified as "areas of concern." Installing a new chain-link fence around the Home of Hope garden, in which the children work to produce their own food, loomed as a large project, but removing

the old fence created its own problems. Brush had grown all around the old fencing and the posts had to be dug out. The old fence was to be used at part of the new system that was desperately needed to keep wandering cattle from trampling and eating the vegetables. Mary Beth and Kathy Surma spent many hours removing brush, and when the old fence was cleared, another problem presented itself: How to move this section to its new location? Emmanuel Chiimba, the administrator of the Home of Hope, called the children of the orphanage and presented the problem. Without comment or whimper, the children positioned themselves along this long length of fence and dragged it to its new location. "Chabadza" in its purest form.

Emmanuel was Keith's constant worker and reminded him every day of the progress they had made. Keith's account on the final day of his visit: "By 3 p.m. we still had so much to finish by 5:30 when the sun would go down, that it seemed almost hopeless. And yet somehow we did complete what needed to get done. As we finished up, Emmanuel said, 'Keith, today we were winners.' I agreed and said, 'It was our best day ever.' Emmanuel said, 'Yes, our best day ever.'

Another project that would help in day-to-day operation of the orphanage was the installation of a water tank reservoir. Steve McPherson, a team member from Brookville, PA quickly earned the title of "MacGyver," when it came to fixing things. Steve hooked up the tank to the water system, and Keith did the installation work—a small project with a big impact as the orphanage would have running water when the power was off, which was 50% of the time.

The August team had the grand finale for their work by taking 25 orphans from the Home of Hope, plus others and their caregivers, on an excursion to Imire Safari Park. For most of the children, it was the first time away from mission, and it did not disappoint. Despite very cold temperatures, all were able to take game rides to see the 600 animals in the park, take part in environmental activities, and do volunteer work. One does not easily forget the excitement of seeing giraffes, zebras, antelopes, and hyenas up close. And the view from atop an elephant is both scary and exciting!

That excitement does not seem to dissipate for those who experience a mission trip to Nyadire. The volunteers go with all kinds of thoughts about what they can bring and do and come away with what the GREAT folks there have done for them.

**For more information about The Nyadire Connection (TNC) visit the website, [www.nyadire.org](http://www.nyadire.org).**

