

¡Digo Sí!

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Spring 2007

FAITH PROMISE An evening to remember

When nearly 250 friends and alumni of the Partnership in Mission gathered recently to celebrate the work of the 2006 missions and to commit to the work of 2007, the atmosphere was joy-filled and inspirational.

The November 6 Faith Promise dinner focused on the journeys and work done with our brothers and sisters who have suffered from Hurricane Katrina.

Special recognition for outstanding service was given to an organization and to several individuals. Jerry Klausen traveled with his wife, Doreen to Chicago to receive the award on behalf of the Mennonite Disaster Service. Vern Witte was honored with the St. Francis Xavier Award for organizing and leading the national disaster services for more than five years. Also receiving the St. Francis Xavier Award were Henry and Rosa Mendivil for their foundational & inspirational work with the Bolivia mission.

One highlight of the event was Bishop J. Peter Sartain's call to us to allow God to show us our family. He told of his trip to Ecuador with Mother Theresa and said that, after he was there, he could never again think of the Ecuadorian people as far away. "God wants us to see everyone as our brother and sister," said Bishop Sartain. "The genius of mission is that we no longer meet a stranger. We allow God to show us who our family is. And these people have a claim on us."

That claim was then called forth by Dr. Jim Healy, as he and Tom Garlitz spoke about the Faith Promise. This call netted nearly \$50,000 for the work of the Partnership in Mission Program.



Vern Witte's acceptance speech for his leadership in the disaster missions.

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Mission Schedules

- Navajo Mission (6/9-23/2007)
- University Mission to Sucre, Bolivia (6/8-22/2007)
- Beyond Boundaries High School Mission (7/9-16/2007)
- SWIM High School Local Mission (7/30-8/4/2007)
- Africa Mission to Kenya (8/30-9/15/2007)
- National Disaster Recovery (ongoing)
- Philippines Mission (2/1-16/2008)

(see Faith Promise on page 4)

UNIVERSITY MISSION TO SUCRE

Thirty-five students from five area universities joined forces to improve the lives of children in Sucre, Bolivia, during last summer's University Mission.

The students represented Benedictine, Lewis, St. Francis, Northern and North Central universities and were accompanied on the trip by a priest chaplain, nurse and campus ministers.

Natalie Bayci, a participant in ten University Missions, has served as coordinator for the last six trips.

With roots in the University of St. Francis in Joliet, the 12-year-old University Mission project focuses on harnessing student power to help children who have been abandoned, who live in orphanages, or who have physical or neurological challenges. Bayci explains that, in addition to delivering needed school supplies, food and medicine, the students provide one-on-one emotional support and loving care.

"The Construction Corps told us about one site with many needs," she explains. "A Day Care Center, a grass roots endeavor developed by working moms who wanted to create a safe environment for their children, needed attention. We purchased 11 gallons of paint, painted the center inside and out, and repaired the plumbing. While all of this activity was going on, some of the students took the children to a park."

Bayci explains that, at other sites, students provide additional hands and hearts to feed, diaper



Natalie Bayci with the University Mission participants

and bathe babies, talk to troubled teens, work with children on homework, or help with crafts and activities.

"Two years ago we built a greenhouse at Hogar Sucre," she says. "They are now able to grow their own vegetables. That same site has a new well, thanks to a member of the pastoral team who raised the funds for it, and a new chapel."

In addition to the work component, each University Mission is also a retreat experience, according to Bayci. "This encompasses daily Mass, prayer, processing what we have shared, and working at being a community of believers.

"Each site has its own challenges but each year improvement comes, and we go back ready to try and make a difference."

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Pam Smith and other people who wrote and provided their insights on the articles in this newsletter .

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is a freelance writer and editor in
Glen Ellyn, IL.

People of Baja reveal rich insights to members of Beyond Boundaries mission

Beyond Boundaries', our new high school mission experience, first mission to the Baja Peninsula in Mexico opened participants' eyes to new cultures and experiences and also provided them with new ways of looking at their own lives.

Art Sheridan III, Beyond Boundaries Coordinator, was among those who flew to San Diego and then crossed the border by mini-van to travel down the coast of Mexico during the July 2006 trip. He was surprised by the unexpected richness of a desert irrigated to grow crops to feed people in the United States and talks about the generosity and wisdom they found in the people they encountered.

"We discovered great depth in migrant workers' children and learned much from the Franciscan Friars' stories about how the local people struggle to feed their families," Sheridan says.

"We found ourselves fully accepted by people who didn't have any idea where we were from. They recognized that we were humans and reached out to welcome us. This left us thinking about how we reach out to the stranger back home in Illinois."

"These children lead a life that doesn't get them much attention from parents," notes participant Elaine Ginger. "Despite the fact that they live a poor lifestyle, the kids manage to maintain a happy, playful life."

The Baja Mission's project was to paint the Franciscan's church. Partway through the work week, says Sheridan, "We realized the central place that faith plays in the life of the local com-

munity. Daily Mass was celebrated, and we were welcomed and included. Teens played a role at every liturgy, and the homilies were even translated for us. We left the church with a brighter coat of paint and an even brighter presence brought about by our combined spirits."

Minor inconveniences led to further comparisons of life at home and new realizations. "No snacking between meals and limited meal sizes brought to our attention the extravagances of our U.S. lifestyle," he explains. "We were able to survive on wonderfully home-cooked meals that filled our need for nourishment instead of our want for more."

And the sharp contrast between the slower pace of the Mission schedule and the typical busyness of their daily lives gave new respect for "appreciation of life in the moment" to many members of the group.

When complicated dialects left even the Spanish-speaking members of the mission feeling the language barrier, the group found new ways to communicate. Says Sheridan, "We all understood the smiles and outreached hands and discovered that the spoken word is not the only way to find God's presence in the people of the world."

A number of participants in last year's Baja Mission plan to return in July 2007 and invite new members to join them. In Sheridan's words, "This life-changing mission brought us into the palm of God's hand. If you look carefully, that hand is reaching out to you. Explore the brochure and application on the web site www.paxjoliet.org/missions and push yourself to experience a new face of God in the people of Mexico."

Faith Promise (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Other meaningful moments during the evening were the opening prayer by Teresa Via-Reque and stories of Katrina mission experiences shared by Gail and Bob Hickman. Bishop Imesch ended the evening with a blessing.

Even the table settings for this event at Abbington Banquets in Glen Ellyn reminded us of our brothers and sisters of the South,



Teresa Via-Reque, Rosa & Dr. Henry Mendivil w/ Bishop Sartain

and the door prizes - especially the beautifully hand quilted bed covering – did the same.

The Faith Promise Dinner for 2007 will be on Friday October 26 at the Abbington. In faith we look forward to another evening of joy and inspiration

Kenya 2006 BY VIC & MARY JANE TRINKUS

We were a team of 19, a medical team to work at the sub-district hospital and Upendo Village (a rescue community for women and children with HIV/AIDS). It was our second mission to Naivasha, Kenya and what a difference that made. We were welcomed with warm hugs, a reuniting of friends, especially for the 6 team members who went on the first mission a year ago.

The preparations for the mission were different this time. We packed and shipped a large container months prior to our arrival. It was full of much needed supplies for the hospital and Upendo Village. The container was in Kenya but due to bureaucracy it had not arrived while we were there on mission. In addition to the container, we also each had our trademark Diocese of Joliet duffel bag assigned to us as personal baggage. Much time and effort went in to packing these duffels, full of medicines, dressings, equipment – all needed items to help care for our brothers and sisters in Naivasha.

We came prepared and began our work. Our days began at 6:00 am, gathering for breakfast at 7:00. We

started each day with scripture reading and prayer, praying for loved ones at home, for those who we would meet and care for in our day's work ahead, for our fellow missionaries, and for guidance and the grace to do "small things with great love." How important, but sometimes difficult, to spend the day giving to others without thinking of what we ourselves want and need. It is this grace that we prayed for.

Our work was challenging but rewarding. The hospital is very poor – necessary supplies are inferior or absent, the staff is required to work hard in very difficult situations. By government policy, the degree of patient care is based on their ability to pay. Yet we were able to work together, friendships were made, knowledge was shared, accomplishments were achieved. A total of 69 surgeries were completed. We were told this was a nine month back log of needed surgeries. The medical team worked in the pediatric ward, recovery room (a new venture due to our arrival), operating rooms, physical therapy, wound care, the female and male wards, maternity,

(continue on the next page Kenya 2006)

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KENYA 2006 (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

outpatient, lab, infection control, spiritual counseling – we were everywhere and always eagerly welcomed and accepted.

As I think back to my own hospital experiences, my thoughts go to two areas. One is the male ward where I met Samuel, a little 13 year old boy. He broke his femur; his family did not have the money for the needed surgery. So Samuel was in traction, bedridden for 6 weeks, hoping his leg would heal, be straight and functional.

And I also think of the women in the female ward. This ward is divided into 4 cubes, 8 women per cube unless the single beds are shared by two patients due to overcrowding. The last cube was known as the “contagious ward”, a ward full of women with TB and/or AIDS. It has a back door that opens closest to the morgue and it is usually where the women go to next. How delighted I was on my last day to say goodbye to Jessica as she walked out with her brother at her side. I visited with her daily and she always told me “I’m getting stronger,” but I feared it was only wishful thinking. What a gift it was to see her leave the ward on her own two feet through a different door!

Upendo Village, (“upendo” means love in Swahili), across the street from the hospital, was a primary focus of our mission work. It is a community, directed and run by the Assumption Sisters of Nairobi, to aid, support, and comfort women and children with HIV/AIDS. Approximately 200 people were seen at the clinic sessions on Mondays and Fridays, mostly by our hardworking internist and infectious disease physician. We worked in 2 tents, one to triage and treat the patients, the other to dispense medications. On Thursday, part of the medical team traveled to a distant site where time was spent in a support group with the clients of Upendo Village that lived in the area. A highly nutritious grain product was dispensed and a mobile clinic was set up to see more patients.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, different members of

the mission team went on home visits. This is a very important part of our mission work. We need to not only see our patients in a clinic or hospital setting, but to see and know how they live, to visit them in their homes. On one of the home visits, I met Angeline and her family. She is married and a mother of two young girls. She is 8 months pregnant and sick with AIDS, skin lesions present on her body. Her husband is HIV negative. Angeline was a victim of a rape (her only sexual encounter outside of her marriage). She became pregnant and HIV positive as a result of this sexual assault. She lost that child in a fire a few years ago. They live in a dark, dirt floor shack. She’s a beautiful woman, greeting us with the brightest, warmest smile as she invited us in her home. She loves her family, worries her husband may leave her, is concerned about her health, but lives a life full of strength, hope and faith. This is due to what Upendo Village has given her.



Jane, an HIV positive and Upendo Village client and her youngest boy Patrick, also HIV positive

You see, Upendo Village is not a hospice program where death is a final outcome. They provide hope, love, services, and resources so those they care for can be strengthened and plan for their futures. They are shown that God loves them, wants them to have faith and hope and to be strong. It is for these reasons that we travel across 8 time zones to partner and work with this wonderful “Village of Love.”

We are all home now, reconnecting with our day to day lives, but not disconnecting with the two weeks of mission. Already we are entertaining thoughts of our return next year, thinking about the supplies we will need, the new goals to work toward, what field of expertise to bring... We know the path will be shown to us as we continue to keep our brothers and sisters of Naivasha in our thoughts and prayers.

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Leadership Retreats strengthen skills and understanding

As mission sites in the Philippines, Kenya, Ecuador, Bolivia and the Navajo Nation continue to develop, the need for mission leaders also grows. Recently, when Justice and Peace Office Executive Director Tom Garlitz invited more than 30 mission alums to consider becoming these needed leaders, the response was strong and heartfelt.

The process of discernment for these leaders began with Tom's letter and continued with a reflective retreat led by Sister Georgene Wilson, OSF. During a session which ran through one evening and the following day, Sister helped retreatants examine various facets of leadership in context with personal experiences of scripture, compare mission accomplishments to standards of excellence for this work, and honor past leaders. Participants agreed that this

time together was very worthwhile and provided a solid start to the leadership endeavor.

Leadership education now turns to a study of mission competencies. Teamwork, leadership and causes of injustice were explored in March under the guidance of Mary Heidkamp, D. Min. In May, Sister Sheila Kinsey, OSF, will help participants explore the competencies of personal integrity, learning from the poor, and mutual-ity and solidarity. And next September, Sister Diane Pryzborowski, OSF, will work with potential leaders to strengthen prayer, reflection and communication skills.



Mary Heidkamp, Dynamic Insights Int'l

At the completion of this work, the new leaders will be ready to bring their skills to the mission field.