

Letters from Overseas

Karen and Bill Butt Write from Mozambique

December 7, 2009

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people."—Luke 2: 10



Working in Mozambique we sense strongly that the angel's message in this famous verse of holy scripture is indeed for all people. It's the same Advent in Mozambique as it is in Canada and everywhere, and the same Child will be born. In rural Mozambique without books or television, theatre has always been the most important and popular way to tell the stories that matter to the people. Girls of all the rural PEDRA centres have been devising and performing their Christmas plays.

All in their PEDRA T-shirts they enact the familiar scenes. The Annunciation—the angel and Mary amazed. The journey to Bethlehem—Mary on the back of two hunched-over girls covered in a *capulana* to represent the donkey. The angel's appearance to startled shepherds and a flock of girls crawling and baaing as sheep. Then the angels, with more *capulanas* draped over their shoulders like wings, lead the shepherds to the manger and they kneel in worship.

PEDRA has been working with an organization called Right to Play, which originated in Canada and is now in many countries. It uses games as a springboard to education. Using interactive games always followed by group discussion where each girl puts forth her thoughts, the PEDRA girls have learned about care for the environment, personal hygiene, best ways of farming, protection from malaria, and much, much more.



One popular Right to Play game is all about making friends and developing friendship. You mill around singing and when the song says, you choose a nearby friend-partner by the nose and hand, as the other photo shows—with, you can imagine, much laughter—and bonded like that you start dancing. The games build solidarity and teamwork, and the discussion develops girls' voices and understanding.

Surely Christ played as a child, and famously his ministry included children, and the message that we all in fact must become as children. So this Right to Play game too expresses in its way the Christmas message. There's a saying in Mozambique, "When a child plays, the whole world wins." In like manner at Christmas: When the Christ child comes, the whole world wins.

In mission and service,
Karen and Bill Butt

To see more letters, and more photos accompanying this letter, visit www.stpaulsunitedchurch.com.

Karen and Bill Butt are United Church of Canada overseas personnel serving with Conselho Cristao de Mocambique in Mozambique. The work of this ecumenical partner and the work of overseas personnel are made possible through your gifts to the Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada.

