

## Letters from Overseas

Karen and Bill Butt Write from Mozambique

April 7, 2010

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." John 21:9–10



Just prior to this verse, the resurrected Jesus on their last day on earth together advises his disciples where to cast their nets. So they do—and have to work hard to haul their grand catch in their nets a hundred yards to the beach, where Jesus does a barbecue. Jesus doesn't give a handout—just a hand. He's brought fish and does the cooking, not because they can't, but to show his love, preparing and sharing a last meal together, his fish and theirs, to say: Though physically I am leaving, our team remains intact.

Time and again in the gospels, with disciples and others, you see Jesus lovingly help people achieve the most they can with what gifts they possess. He makes them feel ownership of their lives and resources. His way doesn't work for passive folk; people are cured by their own initiative and faith, or learn through their own hard work to understand parable and other cryptic teachings. Jesus' way is to empower you: to play to your God-given strengths, keep realistic about your equally God-given limits, and keep on in faith, hope, and love.

The age should be long past in international mission where people from The United Church of Canada or any other organization come to Mozambique or any less "developed" country spreading around handout donations of what they presume to be their superior knowledge and resources. That breeds dependency. It is disrespectful. It is not "sustainable." The United Church doesn't send donors, but partners, who will work the way Jesus did with partners there on the beach.

That's the way it is, for example, in PEDRA's computer class, a reward and enrichment for the senior girls who've been longest in the program and have come to be leaders and mentors for the others. They're all in high school now, relatively mature and intelligent. In urban Mozambique, where all the better jobs are, computer literacy is

a precious skill; these girls have earned the chance to learn it, and are eager.

There's not much teaching; it's mostly empowerment. Show some basic notions, and within minutes on their own they're practising useful operations we hadn't thought to show them, and starting to work on projects we hadn't known they'd have had in mind. Carolina promptly started working on her resumé. Gina designed an invitation for her parents' Easter Day wedding. Sonia typed up her poetry for Valentine's Day.



After Easter when the physical Jesus left his disciples, hurt and baffled as they were, with all their limitations and inexperience, they had the courage and faith to build on the wisdom and love he had left them. In occupied, oppressed, and impoverished Palestine, the Jesus movement continued and spread. He'd done his best to contribute and could only hope they'd do all right after. When our time comes to leave Mozambique, however impoverished and limited its opportunities, however little we ourselves will have accomplished, we'll still have the same hope when it comes to all the people we've had the privilege to work with in various programs, including Flavia, Gina, and Minjurda.

In mission and service,

Karen and Bill Butt

*Visit our global partnership photo site (<http://unitedchurch.smugmug.com>) to see Karen and Bill's photos.*

*To see more letters, and more photos accompanying this letter, visit [www.stpaulsunitedchurch.com](http://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.

