

**Visit by Rev. Kim McKerley, chair of the Ukama/Partnership UCC
Thursday March 20, 2014**

A dozen people attended the visit by Kim McKerley on Thursday. She was invited by the Chikore Workgroup to explain the Ukama/Partnership between the NH Conference and Zimbabwe, Africa. First Church has been a partner since the inception of the partnership in 1996. However, many people have come and gone at FCC and we felt a refresher was necessary. So Kim began by a review of the partnership.

What is Ukama/Partnership?

Ukama is Shona (the language spoken in Zimbabwe) for “we are family” Ukama is a one-to-one relationship between a particular local church in the UCC in Zimbabwe and one in the NH Conference. The first two churches joined in 1996, currently 44 churches, have become part of ukama, bringing respect and a desire to enter into the lives of their sister churches not as benefactor or recipient, but as equals sharing strengths and needs in support of one another.

Ukama/Partnership can provide the structure in which to develop personal relationships between Christians living in profoundly different cultures and contexts.

Ukama/Partnership is a mutually agreed upon commitment for at least three to five years, in which goals are articulated and opportunities for shared worship, ministry and growth are undertaken.

Ukama/Partnership recognizes one’s vulnerabilities and accepts the caring ministry of another. It assumes openness to the differences reflected in the wonderful variety of God’s people and a willingness to allow the Spirit to stretch us beyond our comfort zones. (*excerpts from Ukama/Partnership brochure, www.ukama.net*)

From the Ukama/Partnership Covenant:

Mission

The mission of our Ukama/Partnership is to share with each other and to learn from each other about the spiritual, mental and physical needs of our members and to grow together in our faithful response to our call to witness and ministry.

The Ukama Concept

The ukama concept embraces friendship and sharing each other’s joys and burdens... we intend to bring about a deeper understanding that we are all children of God, regardless of who we are, where we are or what we are doing... Each partner is expected to bring respect and desire to enter the lives of the other, not as a benefactor nor as a recipient, but as equals with strength and needs that enhance the even growth of the relationship.

Responsibilities of the local church

1. Abiding by this covenant.
2. Communicating regularly with the partnered church to keep the relationship thriving.

3. Communicating partnership news within own congregation. Sharing of news from personal correspondences is encouraged.
4. Consulting the Ukama/Partnership committees about program development, financial programs, and travel.
5. Planning church-t-church exchanges in consultation with the respective Ukama/Partnership committees.

Sharing Resources

The primary purpose of the Ukama/Partnership is to create relationships of mutual support for each other....We acknowledge that we are gifted differently and this imbalance hovers at the edges as we walk together in faith. ..We acknowledge that there is a struggle with giving and receiving....Several ways have been established to support the mission and ministries of the UCCZ. Individuals and churches in New Hampshire and in Zimbabwe are encouraged to support churches in the UCCZ by contributing to one or more of the following funds. In these funds, decisions about distribution are made primarily by the UCCZ Ukama Committee, so that the money is allocated where it is most needed. We acknowledge that great desire to help one's partner church and therefore two of the funds allow for targeted giving.

1. The Local Church Construction Grant Fund.
2. The Fund to Support Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living with Aids.
3. The Education Fund.
4. The Food Security Fund.
5. The Water Fund.
6. Crosby Scholarship fund.

(details of these funds may be asked from Chikore Work Group or the ukama website)

To contribute to any of these funds, send a check to the Finance Office at the New Hampshire Conference, 140 Sheep Davis Road, Pembroke, NH 03275.

(Any other questions about Financial Policies and programs can be asked of the Chikore Work Group or the ukama website)

Other things we learned:

*The items we have been donating to a container was and is sponsored by the Wakefield Congregational Church and Light for Zimbabwe and is not related to the Ukama/Partnership.

*Sending money to our partnership church is strongly discouraged.

*Delegations from and to Zimbabwe are partially funded by the Ukama/Partnership Committee, but mostly paid for by individuals and local churches.

*44 NH churches are in relationship with a church in Zimbabwe.

*There are many creative ways to nurture the relationship, including sending letters and emails, pictures, worship bulletins, children's projects, banners, drawings, poems, songs. (for extended list see the Chikore Work Group)

Anyone interested in working on this partnership relationship, please, contact anyone from the Chikore Work Group. *MWARI AVE NEMI* (God be with you)