

MOTHER OF PEACE COMMUNITY A LIGHT in the Darkness

On February 17th 2002 twenty-five American mostly of African decent embarked on a mission of mercy and hope for a small community in the countryside outside of Harare Zimbabwe. This trip was an organized effort to provide support and medical relief for children orphaned mostly by AIDS related illness. The majority of the children are also living and dying from HIV themselves. I was moved by the compassion and love of Mother Jean Cornneck, Founder, Co-Director and Administrator for these precious children who found their way to the "Mother of Peace Community." Since 1994, Mother Jean has been standing in the gap for these children and through the power of her intention and commitment to Life has breath new life into these children. Many of these children were in bad shape, due to the effects of HIV and malnutrition but because of this loving environment, good food and water many have been nursed back to health. Some of the children do die however, but their lives and quality of life have been enhanced through the collective efforts of all who have contributed in any way to the success of the community. In most African Nations, these children who are living with HIV, would have been cast to the side and forgotten. Mother Jean has recruited help as her selfless effort has attracted the attention of humanitarian organizations and heads of states around the world. She currently has a large staff and a governing body of professionals who help to bring the support and notice deserving of this bright spot on the planet known as "Mother of Peace Community. I personally have travel to many places in West and Southern Africa who have not made this kind of community a reality and cultural issues continue to prevent this kind of response to the affect of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

We were lead by Dr. Robert Scott, a well established and long time advocate and activist in Oakland California for Human Rights regarding HIV/AIDS in the African and African American communities. He is also Co Chair along with Gloria Cox Crowell of the AIDS Ministry at Allen Temple Baptist Church. Locally, as a collaborative effort with Church groups, the medical community and social service organizations like the YMCA we carried 26 duffle bags of clothing, school supplies and medicine to "Mother of Peace" along with \$12,000 U.S. dollars of support. This is an effort made by the Oakland community every six months. The next trip is planned for mid August 2002. Many of the problems we continue to experience in the African communities around the world stem from the fear and denial that continue to steal the lives of our family members and love ones, however, there is something we can do. We can adopt a clinic or and orphanages here or abroad. We can use our talents and resources to help others especially if our own blessings allow us to give away what we do not use and in

most cases will not miss but would be so appreciated by those who are less fortunate. We can come to Africa ourselves and witness what Love can do, lending our talents as teachers, healthcare providers, and fundraisers to support this and other similar efforts being made to extend lives. I am personally organizing another effort through my own organization "Aid for AIDS/Africa" to bring collaboration of Faith Based organizations into Africa to better address issues in our communities here and on the continent. Tapestry the Faith based collaborative established three years ago is returning to Africa in late November to support clinics and orphanages adopted in our fact finding tour during 2000 to S. Africa, Ghana, and Zimbabwe. We will return this year and will include the "Mother of Peace Community" as part of the support we intend to bring. We are planning to send shipping containers into Ghana and possibly to S. Africa in support of organizations, we have adopted. We are also planning to send a delegation on into Uganda on this same trip to learn what we can from those who have experienced great success in reducing the HIV infection rate from 60% to around 10% in less than 5 years.

This group who traveled from Oakland to Harare on February 17th, returned on the 26th of February. I continued my trip on into Ghana for another three-week stay. I will also continue writing about this African experience soon.