

Mission and Service Letters from Mozambique Letter 218 27 June 2009

You do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed.... But God gives it a body as God has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. - 1 Corinthians 15:37-38

Every farmer or gardener knows this wonder, that when you plant a seed, it grows to a mature plant with unique characteristics, worth and function according to its species. The workers in the Christian Council's Medi-Plantas project have been more aware than ever of this truth, because this is the time of training of the gardeners in the preparation and use of each plant that have matured in each of the project's total of 32 gardens.

These are one-week seminars, all day every day, closely coordinated with the district Ministry of Health. The students are community activists, traditional healers, and local leaders, many of them HIV-positive, all of them active in Medi-Plantas. It's not just lectures: enthusiastically they teach each other, as you see in the website photo (www.stpaulsunitedchurch.com), bringing plants from their gardens to demonstrate, because each already has experienced the varieties of seed of each grown body of a medicinal plant, and the healing benefits each plant can bring when correctly prepared and administered.



The CCM pharmacy/office in the village of Molumbo filled up with displays of plants, easel-size charts and lists and sketches taped to fill all the walls, and participants on chairs and benches with notebooks learning the relevant properties of each plant, and how to diagnose a patients' conditions that the medicine from each is designed to heal or cure.

Outside in the office yard, the lessons turned to how to process each of the array of plants (see the second web-site photo) into its respective medication—chopping fresh or sun-dried leaves or roots, or pounding them to powder in a mortar-and-pestle, weighing portions and proportions of various mixed plant products, boiling and straining solutions or syrups in pots over wood fires, testing for consistency, packing final products into boxes, envelopes or bottles.



Each farmer/apothecary, back home in one of the 30 neighbourhoods where these gardens grow, armed with a kit of the various paraphenelia, sieves and stirring-spoons and pots and jars, will go to the continuing harvest, preparation of medicines as they have learned, and distribution to their neighbour patients.

After the two more seminars in the next two weeks, there'll be three trained gardener/therapists working in each of the thirty fields, like the three you see in the third website photo. The gardens once planted and the workers once trained, the project continues, sustainably run by the medi-gardener volunteers. Patients pay them what they can, usually in produce—beans or corn or sometimes a chicken—for a life-saving service that grows, literally, from each community's roots.



In mission and service, Karen and Bill Butt