

Shalom Zone builds community in Zimbabwe

3/19/2002 News **media contact: Tim Tanton · (615) 742-5470 · Nashville, Tenn.**

NOTE: Photographs are available with this report. *Snyder is the director of communications for the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Malone, a United Methodist laywoman and Snyder's spouse, is an advocate for affordable housing. They are in Zimbabwe on a mission trip.

*By Dean Snyder and Jane Malone**

MUTARE, Zimbabwe (UMNS) - A United Methodist church is taking a stand against Zimbabwe's economic hard times through a Shalom Zone program that gives people the means to support their families.

Hilltop United Methodist Church, in Sakubva, hosted the first Shalom Zone training outside the United States four years ago. Today, the Shalom Zone principles have flowered into "Isheanesu," a program empowering women and men to become self-sufficient and their children to succeed academically.

The Isheanesu Shalom Zone, born in a room about 12 feet square, includes a restaurant, a bakery, soap manufacturing, knitting and tailoring operations, vegetable gardens and a classroom that provides after-school care and academic enrichment for 58 children.

A brick building under construction will soon house classrooms, a dining hall and administrative offices for Isheanesu. Consistent with the empowerment philosophy of the Shalom Zone program, the company overseeing the construction is one created by Hilltop United Methodist Church to employ and train workers from the high-density, high-poverty community neighboring the church.

The Rev. Gift K. Machinga, superintendent of the Mutare District of the Zimbabwe East Annual (regional) Conference, is proud of the way the Shalom Zone concept has taken hold at Isheanesu, a word that means "God is with us" in the native Shona language.

But Machinga isn't complacent. He is determined to begin new Shalom Zones in two other communities on his district.

"We don't want Isheanesu to be just at Hilltop," he says, as he shows around visitors from the United States. "We want it to spread."

The Shalom Zone movement began in the United States in 1992 in response to outbursts of violence in Los Angeles following the police beating of Rodney King. Church leaders were trained to develop a plan for working with other community institutions and leaders to holistically address the



SHALOM ZONE KITCHEN -- The women of Isheanesu in Sukubva, a high-density suburb of Mutare, Zimbabwe, produce nutritious meals and life-sustaining income from this kitchen and the adjacent bread-baking oven, in two of the several Shalom Zone enterprises at Hilltop United Methodist Church. From left are: Trawde Mhlanga, Audrey Chivhumze and Caroline Chanderia. A UMNS photo by Jane Malone. Photo number 02-75, Accompanies UMNS #113, 3/19/02



NEW CONSTRUCTION -- Following the principles of Shalom Zone training, Hilltop United Methodist Church in Sakubva, Zimbabwe, created its own construction company to build new facilities for Isheanesu, a program empowering women and men to become self-sufficient and their children to succeed academically. Construction costs for the new building to house classrooms, training programs and indigenous businesses are being underwritten by the Holston Annual Conference. A UMNS photo by Jane Malone. Photo number 02-76, Accompanies UMNS #113, 3/19/02



KNITTING PROJECT -- Nancy Mbmhere is learning to knit sweaters at the Isheanesu project at Hilltop United Methodist Church in Sakubva, a high density suburb of Mutare,

