

Frequently Asked Questions about Peace Partnership

Q: What partners are you talking about?

A: We have partner relationships with Lwamondo Parish in Limpopo Province, an area in the Northeast of South Africa, and with villagers of Laurel Galan, a rural community in Nicaragua.

Q: Wow, how did this get started?

A-1: Our South African Partnership began in the early 90's with Peace's friendship with Pastor Tshenu Farisani, his wife Mudzunga and their three young children. Because of the Farisani's anti-apartheid work, they had to flee South Africa in 1986, after he had been imprisoned and tortured four times between the years 1976-1986. His life was threatened many times.

During their time of exile in Berkeley. Pastor Farisani and his family worshiped with us at Peace and considered Pastor Steve their pastor and friend. Pastor Farisani returned to South Africa in July 1993 during the transition from apartheid to democracy. He went to assist the negotiation team in South Africa. Regina completed her undergraduate studies at Holy Names College and obtained her Masters degree at San Francisco State. She and the family returned to South Africa after the end of Apartheid.

Pastor Farisani had a dream about Peace forming a Partnership with Lwamondo Parish in Venda, South Africa (his home) many times. We hosted the first delegation in July of 1996. It was instant friendship and mutual respect.

A-2: Our first introduction to Nicaragua was through the Sister Parish Program led by Vicki Schmitt, a friend of Steve's. After hearing the presentation we decided to become part of this worthwhile program. The program was based on 'walking in solidarity' with our southern communities and not on charity, or giving of our wealth. It was a concept that we struggled with for many years – and maybe still do.

Elena Hendrick was the leader of the North-South Partnership through Sister Parish and assisted us in learning more about our Nicaraguan friends. We hosted a delegation (in the early 90's I believe) that deeply inspired us. Eventually, Elena and Luis Aguirre formed an educational organization in Nicaragua called AKF (Kairos).

Q: Amazing. I did not know that. But how do you keep up the relationship across the continents?

A: We have had many delegations go south to Nicaragua, like the one last year in July, and have hosted 2 more delegations here. Elena and Luis have come on their own to

encourage us and help us maintain the idea of walking in solidarity and not immediately wanting to reach out with financial assistance.

We had several delegations travel to South Africa, the last one in 2005, when Lwamondo Parish dedicated 4 newly built churches, and have hosted some delegations here, most recently in 2006. Other than that we stay in touch through letters, e-mail and phone calls, and we are always praying for each other.

Q: Hm, interesting. I am wondering how these partnerships have influenced us here at Peace.

A: Our South African sisters and brothers have a deep and often expressed faith. Much of their lives is centered around church activities, and they don't hesitate to share their time, talents and very limited funds with their parish. We also learned much about each others realities. We played together, sang together and prayed together. Our time with the Farisani family was a joyous time. I think Peace felt that we were given the opportunity to be directly involved, in a small way, with an historic process.

The philosophy of AKF in Nicaragua has always been that any assistance given must be mutually arrived at by Laurel Galan and Peace, otherwise we would be building dependencies and further injuring an oppressed people. Our partnership, centered in Christ, did have a political as well as a theological side to it. The volatile politics of that time in Nicaragua were integrated with and led by the liberation theology of the Catholic priests in the area. Many from Peace have traveled to Laurel Galan and can tell profound stories about their experience. Young people from Peace have gone and been deeply moved. They were amazed by the sense of community they witnessed in Laurel Galan, the sense of being responsible to and for each other. They also felt that in building community with Laurel Galan we will come to know the lack of community responsibility in our own culture. This is an important area in which Laurel Galan can aid us: understanding the importance of responsibility to one another, locally.”