

THE BRIDGE

Connecting the Fair Haven Community

❄️ WINTER 2005

GOOD NEIGHBORS

African Missionaries in Fair Haven?

How Faith Brought the Muindi Family to Our Neighborhood

ON THE LAST FRIDAY OF OCTOBER, Musyoki Muindi and his wife Kamene—their infant daughter Kavinya cradled in arms—took one small step off a plane in New York and made one giant leap onto an exciting new path in a life dedicated to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world. The long trip from Kenya to Kennedy was over, but now the much longer part of their journey in America was underway. As a missionary family, the Muindis plan to build upon the good work begun when Musyoki first took a job in Nairobi with Britain’s venerable Church Mission Society (CMS) twelve years ago. They have come to lend Musyoki’s expertise to growing the fledgling CMS-USA organization here in Connecticut and bring the gift of their faith and goodwill to Fair Haven.



The Muindi family are quickly settling-in around St. James’ Church. Young Kavi waves as her dad and mom, Musyoki and Kamene, stop for a photo in the hall near Musyoki’s new CMS office.

In 2004, Musyoki and Kamene Muindi decided to pursue an intriguing opportunity to leave their African homeland of Kenya for a two-year assignment as missionaries working in the far-off place called “Fair Haven” in the United States. The prospect of applying what he had learned in over a decade of work and leadership with the East-African branch of the Church Mission Society in benefiting the growth of multi-cultural ministries elsewhere energized Musyoki. The young couple was very excited about the adventure of journeying halfway around the world. They learned, as they considered the matter more seriously, that the offices for CMS-USA (please see related article RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER) share those of St. James’ Church, New Haven and so this would take them to a city which offered great opportunities for cultural experiences and learning—and also happened to be home to a world renowned university. To the Muindis, it sounded like a unique and rewarding pursuit they should embrace. They both felt that God had a plan for their lives and were joyful in their decision to pursue this missionary work abroad. Neither of them would foresee how difficult the journey would ultimately prove and how their patience, strength and faith would be tested.



Upon making their decision, Musyoki and Kamene immediately shared news of their plans with family and friends, and began selling off all their household items and tying up loose ends. Accustomed to traveling internationally with ease, and already in possession of a U.S. Visa, Musyoki expected to receive immediate approval for his family. The Muindis never anticipated the long months of waiting as their approval hung in limbo. Much to their regret, the couple had even sold their bed expecting to be leaving for America shortly. They endured many other trials and tribulations before seeing their plans finally come to fruition. As weeks grew into months, the Muindis waited for word on their fate. Musyoki

jokes about how, after all the fanfare and ‘goodbyes’ surrounding their planned departure, he would run into friends who would exclaim, “I thought you had gone to the U.S. months ago!”

Although technically not in the employment of CMS, as the wife of a missionary, Kamene is a partner in her husband’s mission. She admits with a smile that it really is, after all, a ‘family business’ for her and has had to be an integral part of the move, all the while caring for ‘Kava’, their adorable eleven-month-old little girl. Now that Kava is walking, the couple has their hands full! Back in her home city of Nairobi—one of Africa’s largest with a population of three million—Kamene was partners in a family transportation business with her father. An honor student with an MBA from Stirling University, Scotland, Kamene was utilizing her business acumen in rapidly expanding their new car rental service at the time she and Musyoki decided to venture abroad. It meant cutting back the business in anticipation of the Muindis’ move, and turned out to be yet another premature decision as the family waited in frustration for their visas.

Musyoki attributes the delay of his application to bureaucrats perplexed by his request to travel in the role of a church management position rather than as

a priest-coupled with a cautious State Department following the deadly U.S. embassy bombing in Nairobi in 1998 that left 213 dead. Now that the Muindis have finally arrived here in Fair Haven, they are settling into a new place. It means piecing together from scratch the items needed for house-keeping while Musyoki begins his mission to get the Church Mission Society USA organized and fully functioning. He will be utilizing all the knowledge he gained in running the East African office in Kenya—a region affected by war and famine in its neighboring countries. Musyoki joined the 200-year-old CMS the summer after he earned dual degrees in economics and political science—intending it only as a short-term decision to gain work experience. It was only a two-person operation then and now, over a decade later, the Nairobi office is twelve and Mr. Muindi has been integral to the growth and management of an organization working with and through churches helping needy people struggling with poverty and displacement. Their work is also about discipleship in a urban modern context and it is this special perspective that Musyoki brings to the CMS mission here in the U.S.

Despite the trials and delays in reaching our community, the Muindis feel that God gave them strength and was with them guiding their way all along their journey. We welcome them!

✚ St. James’ Response Card Please, let us hear from you!

- I would like to make the following comments on this issue of *The Bridge*:
- I would like to request prayers from the church for the following:

- I would like a pastoral visit from the church.
- I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the ministry of St. James’ Church in Fair Haven. Enclosed is a check for the following amount: \$_____

Name:
Address:
Telephone:
E-mail:

Please clip and mail to: St. James’ Church, 62 East Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT 06513 (Or, better yet, drop it by the church office anytime.) **Thank you!**



HISTORICAL HAVEN

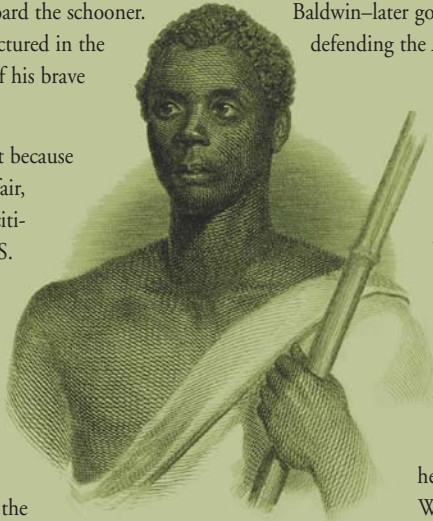
CINQUÉ—THE GODFATHER OF NEW HAVEN MISSIONARY SOUL

The story of the famous Amistad incident, which first excited Americans in late August of 1839 with news of the capture of a Spanish slave ship commandeered by African captives, is by now a familiar one to New Haveners. A folk hero would emerge in the form of a 25-year-old Mendi tribesman the Spanish called "Joseph Cinqué," a rice farmer by the name of Sengbe Pieh who led the overthrow of the captors onboard the schooner. The charismatic Cinqué became widely pictured in the popular media of the day and the results of his brave action have left us a fascinating legacy.

It is also an interesting local tale significant because of the role this city played in the whole affair, and for how some of its most progressive citizens came to help change the course of U.S. history. The city jail housed the displaced Africans—where the captives quickly became a curiosity, and jailers charged admission—and the media circus trial took place here in the Elm City after the court moved the proceedings south from Hartford. Fortunately, a few of New Haven's finest minds were concerned with the fate and welfare of the 39 jailed Mendi tribesmen.

The Amistad situation exploded into the forefront of the already hot debate in antebellum America over slavery and its abolition. The capture of *La Amistad* and its human cargo was an international incident involving Spain, and before it was over it required U.S. President Martin Van Buren and his cabinet, former president John Quincy Adams, the Supreme Court, the House and Senate, and four years to decide the case and restore the kidnapped Africans to their homeland.

Prominent New England abolitionists—including clergy, lawyers, and the Yale community—rallied to the defense of the African people's rights. The Mendis understood only their own language, but Josiah Gibbs of the Yale Divinity School eventually established a means of communication. In September 1839, Lewis Tappan, Simeon Jocelyn, and Joshua Leavitt formed the



Amistad Committee to raise a defense for the captives. Simeon Jocelyn, after studying for the ministry at Yale, was the first pastor of the "United African Society" which became Dixwell United Church of Christ. Along with his brother Deacon Nathaniel Jocelyn of North Church, they recruited Simeon's abolitionist friend, New Haven lawyer Roger Sherman

Baldwin—later governor of Connecticut—in successfully defending the Amistad captives. Lewis Tappan, and his brother and partner Arthur, were two of America's most fervent abolitionists and later a part of the Underground Railroad. They later became famous as the innovators of the first credit reporting agencies, their legacy being the Bradstreet & Dunn company.

In the end, the abolitionists who aided the Amistad captives succeeded in freeing the Africans and ensuring their return home. Some also worked to bring about missions that helped free and educate slaves. Dr. James W.C. Pennington, an escaped Maryland slave, was allowed only to audit classes at

Yale, but became pastor at the Temple Street Congregational Church and later in Hartford minister of the black Congregational Church. There the Union Missionary Society formed and Pennington took the helm as its first president, raising funds to pay for the Amistad Africans' return voyage. After the resolution of the incident, the Amistad Committee transformed itself into the American Missionary Association. Between its formation in 1846 and the end of the Civil War, the A.M.A. founded and/or supported 285 antislavery churches and commissioned 45 abolitionists as itinerant ministers in the U.S., and afterwards established hundreds of schools for freedmen. The spark ignited by Cinqué inspired many missionaries and flamed the long movement for freedom for blacks in America.

Sources for this article include these websites: amistadresearchcenter.org, www.amistad.org and www.yaleslavery.org/Abolitionists/abolit.html

RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

Mission in the Mix

Back in 1977, the Reverend Geoff Little first had an idea to create a mission that would encourage churches in diverse, multi-ethnic communities to adopt a "multi-cultural" approach in how they saw their ministries. It is a vision Geoff calls "Mission in the Mix!" and St. James' Church is a model for the concept. Geoff and others saw non-integrated churches—whether black, Hispanic or white—coexisting as estranged neighbors in otherwise integrated neighborhoods. As churches, they were not really sharing any Christian community with each other.



As the mission began to take form, the founders knew that they were small and the job large. They decided to apply to the Church Mission Society to become their sister organization in the USA. It was also a way of receiving the support of a large and experienced world association. Since their founding in Great Britain in 1799, CMS has been a leading agency in mission work, sending 9000 men and women into service worldwide. Today CMS has about 150 mission partners in 26 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

In 1998 the CMS Board approved the application and CMS-USA was formed. Today the group is providing consultations to other churches and training Christian leaders to work in mixed-cultural settings. To help expand the mission here, CMS Britain has *secunded*—or paid for—the services of Musyoki Muindi over the next two years. (please see related article GOOD NEIGHBORS)

Please visit the websites: www.cms-uk.org and www.episcopalian.org/cms-usa to learn more about the Church Mission Society.

Pastoral Reflections

The First Christian Worship Service



BY THE REV. GEOFF LITTLE
PASTOR, ST. JAMES' CHURCH

After they had heard the king, the Magi went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, and of incense and of myrrh. (Matthew 2:9-11).

This Winter issue is dedicated to the intercultural life and mission of St. James' Church. Consider how the above well-known Christmas story in the Bible inspires us to walk in that direction.

The story of the three Magi (or Wise Men) is much more than the sentimental portrait our Christmas cards paint for us. It is actually the first ever recorded service of Christian worship. The telling of the story includes many features we have come to expect in a formal church service: the Lord himself present, the joyful gathering of believers, the reverencing of Jesus, and even an offering.

More importantly it is a profoundly intercultural worship service. We are not sure exactly who the Magi were or where they came from, whether they originated all from one nation or each from different nations "from the east." But we do know they were not Jewish, like Mary, who was also present at the scene. Two languages at least must have been heard at this meeting in Jesus' first home in Bethlehem (no, the Magi were never at the manger!). We do not like to think of this tranquil scene being cluttered with things like line-by-line translation or hand-signal communication, but this is surely what had to have happened.

At St. James' our worship and ministries, like the Saturday Literacy Program and the Church Mission Society, are dedicated to intercultural fellowship not just because it fits the mixed Fair Haven community in which we live, but also because Jesus desires his church to be a "house of prayer for all nations" (*see Mark 11:17*).

We think Jesus is overjoyed by the fact that people of over fifteen nationalities worship together in our small congregation. In fact, I like to say St. James' is the only place in Fair Haven where Blacks, Whites and Hispanics come together voluntarily. We want to be together just like the Magi and Mary wanted to be together that day to worship Jesus.

Come and join us.

Family Matters

A Correspondence with Cuban Kids

BY BLANCA R. LITTLE
TEEN MINISTRY DIRECTOR
ST. JAMES CHURCH

For over two years St. James' Church has been a part of a three-way urban-suburban-overseas church partnership with St. Paul's Church in Greenwich and *Misión El Salvador* in Las Tunas, Cuba and have an ongoing correspondence with the Cubans. Letters like the one we received earlier this year from one Cuban teenaged girl name Maylen testify to her faith:

"I am a member of Iglesia El Salvador just like my mother and my sister. I would like us all to remain united and to follow the way of the Lord because he is our Pastor."

Recently our *Poiema* teens wrote Christmas letters back to Cuba. Many wrote sentiments like: "I hope you get everything you want!" They have no idea that most kids in Cuba will not receive any Christmas presents at all. It will be interesting to read the Cubans' response.

The level of cultural disconnection between our kids and theirs is frightening, but I look forward to this correspondence. After all the whole point of the partnership is to know and love each other as Christ knew and loved us.



Please join us for our Three Kings Day for Kids

Saturday, January 7, 2006 2 PM at St. James' Church. There will be food, games and gifts from the Three Kings for children ages 5-12. Call (203) 467-6958 to sign-up.

Created for the Fair Haven community by



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COMMUNITY AND CHURCH CALENDAR WINTER 2005

Service every 1st Sunday
10 AM: Sermon and Holy Communion, bilingual.
Community lunch following the service.

Services every 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays
10 AM: Sermon and Holy Communion, English language.
12 NOON: Sermon and Holy Communion, Spanish language.
Sunday school for children and teens during both services.

St. James' Literacy Program: Saturdays, 2-4 PM, at the Church. September-June for kids ages 5-8. Call Blanca Little, (203) 467-6083.

Alzheimer's Support Group: Every 1st Wed., 7 PM, The Mary Wade Home, 118 Clinton Ave. Call Rosanne Mondrone, (203) 562-7222

Christmas Bazaar at Mary Wade: Friday, December 9, 10AM-3PM. Holiday crafts, baked goods, white elephant table. Call (203) 562-7222

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