

Learning While Walking Down the Road

By Julie Keller



Mentoring can happen anywhere. Even on a dirt road in Kenya.

Editor's Note: Dr. Jim Engel, in the article "Building a Bridge to the Next Generation" on page 21 of this issue, mentions a woman who co-directs The St. David Kenya Partnership Group at the Episcopal Parish of St. David in Minnetonka, Minnesota. God has used Dr. Engel from the Builder generation and Julie Keller, age 40, to minister in Kenyan communities and among team members in their own home church. We asked for Julie's perspective on this mentoring relationship.

I have learned so, so much from Jim, but three major things come to mind.

First, while working with Jim I have learned to "let God move" —at least more often than I've done in the past. While I still have a healthy respect for strategic planning and creating systems that enable people to be served, Jim has helped teach me the importance of active prayer in ministry development and remembering first and foremost that our mission is to be an instrument of God to help carry out God's will, rather than determine it by relying simply on fancy charts and well-honed objectives.

Second, I have watched Jim "see the forest from the trees" over and over again. While I am at times tempted to take a

narrow and short-term focus, Jim has encouraged me to take a broad and long-term view as well. I have seen his perspective, grounded in his faith in God and influenced by his many years of professional experience, gently steer and ably develop our Kenya Partnership to be strong for years to come.



The St. David Partnership Group with Kenya partners in February, 2005; Rev. Barb Milligan, Julie Keller, Rev. Jim Cook, Dr. Jim Engel with many Kenya friends.

Third, another important thing I have gained from Jim through his mentoring relationship is his optimistic sense that dreams and a passionate vision can come true. It's been such a gift to have someone come alongside me and say, "Yes, that is possible!" To have someone with such vast experience assure me that a dream (such as our Kenya Partnership) can come true with dedication and hard work is very empowering.

One of my richest experiences was walking on a back road in Kenya with Jim and a young Kenyan girl. We were ahead of the others in our group, she was singing and we were having so much fun. This was a very powerful metaphor for me: Jim was showing me the road. He was not telling me about his experience, but he was showing me the world. Working with him and being mentored by him has been a tremendous and growing experience.