



South African Song and Dance Group Entertains

All Ages

by Bill Ross

The sanctuary at South Church was rocking on Sunday Nov. 7th as Thula Sizwe, a 10-member group from South Africa, entertained a packed house with songs and dances celebrating village life, and painted moving pictures of life in South Africa.

In addition to the public performance at South Church, Thula Sizwe also performed in four Granby schools over the course of two weeks in November. Thula Sizwe's visit to Granby was funded by the Granby Education Foundation.

Many of the students have been studying Africa, and the concerts gave them a better understanding of Zulu culture. Fourth grade teacher Lori Armentano, who was about to start teaching a unit on Africa in her class, said of the school performance, "This is just the kind of thing the Granby Education Foundation should fund. It was just great."

Several Granby families had the privilege of hosting the performers and a potluck supper was held at South Church on November 5th for everyone involved. After enjoying a meal and fellowship, Thula Sizwe sang **Shosholoza**, a traditional Southern African folk song. The song was traditionally sung by all-male work gangs in a call and response style but was heard around the world when South Africa hosted the World Cup Soccer tournament this past summer.

Jabulani Abel Dlamimi, the leader of Thula Sizwe, met several of the young men in the group in 1988, at the height of the anti-apartheid struggle. Being descended from generations of musicians, he became the group leader and lead voice, putting his talents to work writing music and choreographing songs based on the ancient Zulu tradition where warriors danced and sang to prepare for battle. Although the group's origins are in the poverty-stricken Black Townships, their music reaches across racial and class divides.

Thula Sizwe's six-week tour of New Jersey, New York, and New England was partly managed by John Farrell and Bridges of Peace and Hope, a global arts in education network connecting students, teachers, and artists through music, writing, creative arts, technology, and community service projects.

Farrell, an accomplished singer/songwriter, performed moving pieces about love, understanding, and compassion at both the school assemblies and the performance at South Church. Farrell also helped educate the audiences (particularly in the schools) about South Africa – its people and its history.

Thula Sizwe will be back in the USA in 2011 and they would love to return to Granby. Of the group's visit to Granby, Dlamimi said, "Granby was a really good place, the host families, and the people were really good to us and we hope that we will see you again in the near future to continue to build this friendship. Thank you to everyone."

For more information about Thula Sizwe and or the Bridges of Peace and Hope, visit:
www.thulasizwe.com and www.bridgesofpeaceandhope.org