Dear Friends and Family,

This Kaimosi Connection marks a shift. For three years, Mary Kay has lent her golden pen to most of our communications. I am entirely biased, but truthful, when I say that she is a gifted writer. As we have worked together at FTC, I have tried to keep the light bill paid, the students in class, the faculty equipped, the budget on track, and the Board informed. Communications have generally fallen on Mary Kay’s desk, and she has produced Kaimosi Connections regularly, faithfully, and thoughtfully. I always enjoy reading them, and I usually learn something from them! I will miss her style. Those interested can follow her new directions in ministry in a separate e-mail letter, which she has already spoken of elsewhere. Updates are posted on the blog about her medical training: www.marykayrehard.blogspot.com. The task of producing Kaimosi Connections will now fall to me. I hope the newsletter will continue to be informative, though no doubt the quality of editing and thoughtfulness of reporting will not match her high standard. But I want to say this public thank you to my spouse, partner, and best friend for the effort and creativity she has put into Kaimosi Connection.

What is happening at FTC? Probably the most exciting thing is that in a little over a week we will choose a contractor to begin construction of our new meetinghouse, a multi-purpose worship space that is much needed here. As soon as there is something to take pictures of, I’ll take pictures. (I’ll also have to get Mary Kay to teach me, again, how to use that Glob, or Blog, or Glug, or whatever they call it.) The new meetinghouse is part of a much larger project of strategic planning which FTC’s wonderful Board of Governors began undertaking in 2003. Long conversations with Kenyan Friends and with the FTC Board of Governors, combined with very helpful consultation with a strategically-minded Friend at West Richmond Meeting, are resulting in a ten-year plan to bring FTC to a higher level of excellence in the training of pastors and other Christian leaders for Friends in East Africa. This plan envisions the accreditation of the college in three phases: affiliation with an accrediting college (St. Paul’s United Theological College, Limuru), independent accreditation (with the Kenya Commission for Higher Education), and addition of a bachelor’s degree to our current programs. This entails equipping our faculty with master’s degrees, appointing an academic dean, expanding our student body to 110 (double the number we found when we arrived), and expanding our facilities. We have made a great deal of progress in each of these areas, but we have a long way to go. I hope that by July the strategic plan will be publicly available in a brief format.

At the moment, please pray for us as we search for an academic dean, build the meetinghouse (funded by a generous Friend in Indiana Yearly Meeting), and work with the Kenya government on upgrading our accreditation.

I had the chance today to read the reminiscences of several Friends involved in the decision, in the 1990s, to take responsibility for FTC, which was in ruins, and rebuild it. This took commitment from Friends across North America. Further commitment from the John Sarrin Scholarship Fund has helped a great many students pay the fees at FTC. But it took the special commitment and dedication of Indiana Yearly Meeting as a body, at a time when
FUM was uncertain about whether FTC was a viable proposition. A large portion of FTC’s operating budget still comes from two endowment funds managed by Indiana YM. Our current progress and many blessings are built on a foundation laid by David and Linda Brock, Mary Glenn Hadley, David Phillips, Richard and Sandra Davis, and the late Russell Nye, who made some tough decisions but had faith in God and in Friends that FTC was not only needed, but viable. I remain grateful to each one of these Friends, as well as to many, many other Friends who took up their vision, supported Rich and Sandy during their difficult but productive years as principal, and helped advise Retha McCutchen as she took leadership from the side of FUM. Because of the commitment of these Friends, FTC remains in a healthy and stable operating condition that does not require regular fundraising efforts for the operating budget. Any talk about the development of our future rests on the foundation built by these Friends.

Where we sometime worry a little bit is closer to home. My presence here as principal, and our family’s joint ministry here, depends on the monthly, even daily, generosity of Friends who share this commitment to equipping Kenyan Friends for Christian leadership and the advancement of the gospel. Over the last several months, we have drifted between being in the red and in the black rather more often than we’d like. Generous contributions at Christmas time have assured that we are in the black in January, but when our salary is paid at the end of the month we will probably fall into the red again. If Friends have the ability, it would help us a great deal if you could send an extra boost to the account this month, to help us remain in the black. Another way you might consider helping our ministry: discussing Field Staff needs in your monthly meeting and making a coordinated effort to set, and reach, a goal for giving. This approach has been very successful at West Richmond and Wabash Friends Meetings. If it would be helpful, we are available to give specialized attention to your meeting’s requests for information and open to your feedback about the college and pastoral ministry among Friends in East Africa.

Finally, I will be traveling among Friends in the US in April, speaking about our work at FTC. FUM has asked field staff to think about deputation at times other than summer, and I am grateful to have the flexibility to do this. If your meeting is interested in a visit, please contact Pat Shrock at FUM (psh613@aol.com) to arrange it. In dialogue with the central office of FUM, we have decided together that our fundraising goal between now and May 1st to enable us to continue is $25,000. I need to be clear that this is a mutually-agreed goal with which I feel very comfortable—not a figure imposed on us! We are so very blessed that FUM is such a good organization to work for, sensitive to the needs of field staff and always willing to listen. So I ask for your prayers and your generosity as we work to meet this goal before and during our time of deputation.

Post-finally, a personal note: Emma is developing into a gifted cellist, but her turn to use the school cello is long over. If any Friend has expertise in stringed instruments and could help us locate a used instrument of good quality (or knows a willing soul who could help), please drop me an e-mail!

Mary Kay and I tell one another almost daily, without a hint of sentimentality, that we are borne up and sustained by the prayers of many, many Friends and family in the US. We are grateful for your continuing prayers, and we regularly lift you to God in thanksgiving.

In God’s peace,