

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings from Arusha, Tanzania! We are wonderfully pleased to learn of your congregational commitment to our ministry here in Tanzania. We welcome you as new partners in these efforts and wish to share with you more of what it is that we now do together.

Linda, our daughters, Laura, Sarah, and Katherine, and I live and serve in this area of Northern Tanzania called Arusha. It is a community with a real mixture in terms of people and population as there is both an urban area of close to half a million people and a rural area inhabited mainly by the traditional Maasai people.

Our work is in health. As a doctor and public health specialist, my time is shared between directing the Selian Lutheran Hospital, community health outreach, and a major church campaign to battle AIDS. All of these activities are exciting. I can regularly be heard to say that life is often frustrating but never boring in this ministry.

Linda is involved with several projects which serve those in greatest need. She has begun a project to work with widows and abused women in the community. Sadly, these women are often destitute and neglected by the traditional society. Women also suffer disproportionately from the ravages of AIDS and so Linda has helped to initiate an organization of women combating AIDS.

Together our ministries resonate the Gospel among a people who are anxious to hear the Good News. The Lutheran Church is already established and strong in many parts of our area. But traditional groups of people are only just beginning to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. Good News it is, as many of these people have a traditional understanding of God as creator and with whom humankind is somehow distant. The Good News of the Gospel is that God has undertaken to reconcile us to himself through Christ.

There is a spiritual understanding of health as well among these people. Health means to be whole, and wholeness requires reconciliation with God and with one's neighbors. Hence, illness is a time in which spiritual healing must be sought as well as physical care.

Thus our ministries to serve the poor with the love of Christ rings incredibly truly and powerfully in the lives of many of these peoples. It is an exciting and challenging ministry to serve and share and learn among the Maasai of Tanzania.

We hope and trust that your partnership with us in these ministries will be prayerful as well as financial. Keep us in your prayers as it is your prayers which continue to give us strength. Let us be in touch about the lives of our congregations and our ministries. We need you, the people of Tanzania need you, and you too will gain and grow from being in ministry with us.

God bless you and keep you in all His peace!

Mark and Linda Jacobson