

A New Day In Tanzania

The Northern Great Lakes Synod Delegation to the Installation of Presiding Bishop Alex Malasusa Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania October 31-November 16, 2007

On November 11th in front of about 5,000 people, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, East Africa, the bishop of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese (ECD), the Rev. Alex Malasusa was installed as Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). Our synod was represented by me, my spouse Luanne, (Trinity, Ishpeming), Pastor Peter Andersen and his son Philip, (Christ the King, Escanaba), and Roger and Kay Knuth (Immanuel, Rhinelander). The five hour service of was held in front of Lutheran Cathedral in Dar es Salaam, next to the Indian Ocean in 100 degree heat. The installation included addresses by the President of Tanzania Jakaya Kikweta, the former Presiding Bishop Dr. Samson Mushemba and by Bishop Malasusa. I was privileged to be the preacher for the day. My sermon entitled "Feed My Sheep" was based upon John 21. The festive worship service was nationally televised, featured in the daily newspapers and blessed by the music of a number of congregational choirs including our friends in the Kijitonyama Church Choir. It was a magnificent day.

In his address to the assembly, the President of Tanzania announced that he was not endorsing any change in Tanzanian law to allow for Islamic Courts. Instead he said he would wait until the report from the Parliament Committee entrusted to study the issue before he made a recommendation to the nation. He promised to do what was best in the national interest. The newspapers and those present seem to think that the President was backing away from his political party's nominal support for the concept of Islamic courts. The Muslim president also agreed in his remarks to continue to work with the Church in our common agenda to serve the poor and to educate our people.

Present at the Installation were thirty five bishops from throughout sub-Saharan Africa as well as a representative bishop from Sweden and the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany. The Tanzanian Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the former national President Benjamin Mkapa and many government officials were also in attendance.

In his address, Bishop Malasusa called upon the government to fight corruption. "Why is it," he said, "that everyone is against corruption in Tanzania and yet it still exists? The government can and must do more." He also pledged himself to a leadership based upon unity for God's people.

Our friend Bishop Alex Malasusa has a large responsibility placed upon his shoulders. At 47, he is the youngest of the Tanzania bishops. He brings considerable skills, passion and wisdom to this work. He will be an excellent leader for the whole Church. Bishop Malasusa, as is the custom in Tanzania, will remain bishop of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese while serving as the national presiding bishop. Since these new responsibilities will force him to travel outside of the diocese a great deal, more diocesan work will fall upon his Assistant, the Rev. George Fupe. Pastor Fupe is a dedicated and hard working pastor.

Our Northern Great Lakes Synod delegation spent two weeks in Africa. In addition to a safari in the Arusha area and a trip to Zanzibar we spent considerable time

with our respective companion synod congregations. Pastor and Philip Andersen spent time with the people of Magogoni Lutheran Church and Roger and Kay Knuth visited with Mbagala Lutheran Church. Luanne and I were at Mtumbi Lutheran Church.

We also spent several days visiting the various institutions of our Church in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese:

Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary

Even before we entered the school grounds, we realized that good things are obviously happening at the Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary. The road to Kisarawe is improved over the last time I was at the school in 2003. The new black top road is much more convenient, and in excellent repair. And it is smooth! The Acting Head Master, who replaced the Headmaster who died this year, met us as we entered the campus. Good news—the library looks good and it is being used. There were students in the library stack area studying and preparing for national exams.

The computer lab in the library building seems well built with about 40 computers in use. We were told that the problems they have had with signal reception from the dish satellite system will be rectified when the dish is placed on a platform further away from the ground. The electricity generator works (they started it up for us), as does the water collection system. The Acting Headmaster told us that about 70% of the water problem has been solved thanks to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Grant I. Students are able to take showers every day! A solution to the other 30% of the water problem is still being sought.

We toured the new kitchen and dining facilities now under construction. About 20 workers were involved, on the day we were there, framing the building. The school administrators think it will be completed by the end of the year.

The teachers and administrators seemed to be competent. We met John Mtumbuka, the math teacher our synod supported for his graduate work. He seemed to be an especially intelligent and dedicated teacher. We also met two students whose education is funded by our synod. .

There are concerns and struggles at Kisarawe. Enrollment, now at just over 200 needs to increase. The current student dormitories are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

Our synod, under the direction of Pastor Robert Langseth, has applied for a third USAID grant which will assist in the solving of the housing issue at Kisarawe. While the paperwork for these foreign aid grants are huge, and the burden for the Diocese significant, this does seem the best way to fund these capital projects.

Later in the same week I introduced Bishop Alex Malasusa and Asst to the Bishop, Rev. George Fupe and my wife to the American ambassador Mark Green at the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam. We told the ambassador the importance of this work at Kisarawe and he assured us that the American government through USAID would continue to be receptive to our grant applications.

Tuimaini University-Dar es Salaam Campus

An unfolding success story is the Tuimaini University-Dar es Salaam Campus (TUDECO). It is the newest of branches of the Tanzanian Lutheran college system. The Dar campus has made great strides since its beginning as a branch of our ELCA church school Waldorf College. When I was last at the TUDECO campus in 2003, the

school had few students and considerable debt. Upon his election as Diocesan leader, Bishop Malasusa employed a strong administrator, Professor Geoffrey Mmari, as university provost. Great things have happened in these past four years. Kurasini Church has built on their property, a building which provides classrooms and library services for some of the student body. The building on the Kurasini campus is about the best constructed building I have yet to see in Africa. They have good classrooms, a small library and a computer center with the classrooms. TUDECO now has about 1600 students with about 150 graduating this year. They are now fully accredited. Tuition is about \$1600 a year. The school offers degrees in business, law, library science and mass communication. The plan of the Diocese is to further expand the degrees offered and to expand the number of students. The college has both Muslim and Christian students. The current student body president is a Muslim; the vice-president of the students is a Christian.

The school would like to consolidate its students on one physical campus instead of the three widely dispersed sites that now exist. TUDECO also continues to seek a closer relationship with Finlandia University in our synod.

Mkuza Women's Center

The ministry at Mkuza Women's Center is changing. Originally designed as a trade school (gardening, sewing, small business), the school is now planning to become a girls secondary school. The facilities of the Center include a Dormitory built by the Church of Finland. The women of our synod donated money to purchase the furniture in the dormitory. The building is currently being used for occasional retreats and meetings.

The Diocese is working on a fund raising plan for the secondary school at Mkuza. When we were in Dar es Salaam there was a fund raising dinner one evening to secure pledges for the project. It is expected that the new facilities at the school will cost at least US \$200,000 to build.

Mtoni Deaconic Centre

The Mtoni Deaconic Centre serves mentally disabled children. About 45 students are in residence at the Centre, just one of three such boarding schools in the country. The cost of the school is shared by the federal government that provides salaries for the teachers. The Centre also has an outreach program for neighboring children who are too young or otherwise not yet able to live at the school. The Centre is in the midst of a building program for new classroom space.

It is a delight to visit the Mtoni Deaconic Centre. The young people are being well cared for and some of them are able to be taught skills that will help them be more self sufficient economically after they complete their program at Mtoni.

Eastern and Coastal Diocese Medical Dispensary System

Disease haunts Africa. Life expectancy in Tanzania is about 44 years and is in decline due to Malaria and HIV-AIDS. There is a health crisis in the nation and the Church is struggling to assist its people. The Diocese has employed a new Medical Coordinator; Dr. Tunitweni M. Mwinuka. She is the spouse of the Diocesan Treasurer Comelord Swei.

The ELCT provides about fifteen percent of all of the health services in Tanzania with 20 hospitals and 160 clinics called dispensaries. In the Eastern and Coastal Diocese there are six dispensaries and a plan to build a hospital. We visited the Mtoni Dispensary and the dispensary on Zanzibar. The Zanzibar dispensary is a model of efficiency, cleanliness, and outreach as half of the patients are Muslim.

There continues to be a great need for better medical equipment and more trained persons to staff and administrate the clinics. The new clinic being built at Mtoni will be a great improvement over the current site. We visited the anticipated site of the new hospital in the Mtoni area.

General Observations -- Life and the Church in Tanzania

+There is noticeable economic improvement in the cities. Dar es Salaam has skyscrapers! With urban growth comes automobile traffic congestion. The city is cleaner than it was four years ago. Corruption in the economy and the government continues to be a struggle. Crime is under control but the government and private interests spend a great deal of resources on security.

+The Church in Tanzania continues to grow. The ECD is full of energy and ideas. They are a Church with vision! They are planning for the future and for growth. Building space, education of clergy and Christian education for both adults and children are issues when you have about a 10% growth in membership annually.

+There is a blossoming charismatic presence in the Church in Tanzania. The church has managed this growth in these "fellowship" groups by providing clergy and facilities for special worship services.

+Malaria is Africa's "Number One" health problem along with HIV-AIDS. The Aids pandemic is being talked about much more than it was just a few years ago. The Church has an active anti-HIV-AIDS strategy. Widows are a great concern. The Church sees the need for orphanages as part of the answer for the growing number of abandoned children.

+Tanzanians are young. Tanzanian Christians are young. The average age of a Tanzanian is about 17 years compared to an average American who is about 36. Church members in the United States are much older than the people of the Church in Tanzania. There young couples with families fill the buildings.

+Politically, while Tanzania remains a functional "one party" state there are stirrings of democratic dissent and minority political movements. Ambassador Green indicated to us that the United States wants to see more "checks and balances" in the government with an enhanced role for the Parliament. The Eastern and Coastal Diocese of our Church is a significant political force in the nation. The government regularly seeks advice from and cooperation with the Lutheran community along with the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans.

+Bishop Malasusa has placed in positions of responsibility both lay and ordained women. The Eastern and Coastal Diocese has more ordained women than any other diocese of the Church in Tanzania. Bishop Malasusa is very popular. His warm and friendly attitude is absolutely welcomed by the people of the Church and a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop

13 December 2007