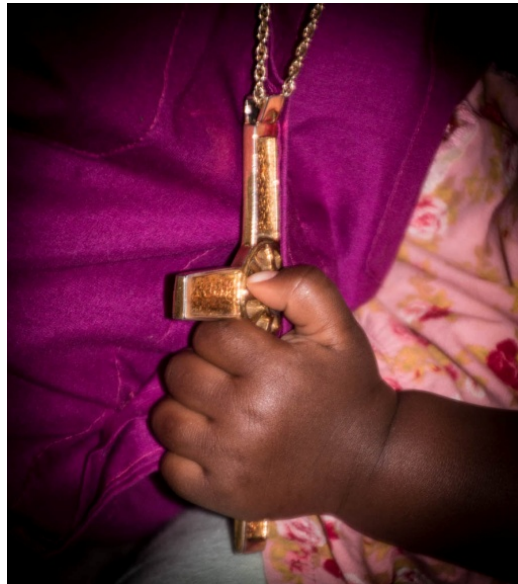


# SUSTAINABILITY

## 2017 Mission Experience in Tanzania

### July 6-22

Bishop Thomas and Luanne Skrenes



### **Our 25 Years Together**

In Galatians 5, St. Paul writes that the “fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” For eighteen years as bishop and bishop’s spouse here in the Northern Great Lakes Synod, we have seen the reality of Paul’s words to the Galatian Christians. This companion synod ministry has been spirit led. There have been many fruits of God’s work. This trip to Tanzania in July was our seventh to the people of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania since 2001 when we made our first mission. We have been a part of the work which has now extended for 25 years. We stand in a long line with more than 150 of our synod people and more than 150 Tanzanian Lutherans who have shared our lives in these past quarter century as we have traveled to each other’s lands and into the homes of Christian sisters and brothers.

In the booklet “*Companion Synod: 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Jubilee 2017*” published by our synod and widely distributed both in the Northern Great Lakes Synod and in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese, nine articles outline the work God has done. We stand on the shoulders of these testimonies of faith and upon the work of the missionaries and Christians of Tanzania who have proclaimed Christ and Christ crucified for over 125 years as Lutheran ministry has been done in Tanzania, East Africa.

## The Dental and Health Clinic

Much of the 2017 mission and most of its participants were focused on the Dental and Health clinic which happened at the Mtoni Clinic. Set in one of the poorest areas of Dar es Salaam, this week long clinic was a fabulous success. The clinic was under the Diocese Health Directorate-Social Services Department. This dental mission was the third one that our synod has co-sponsored with the Tanzanian Church.



There were hundreds of people who continually filled the courtyard for services all five days of the clinic. Besides the dental work offered there were blood pressures taken, blood sugar monitoring, and eye glasses offered. In excess of 400 patients were served. This health ministry was greatly appreciated by the Tanzanian church and was highlighted on Tanzanian television and in the newspapers.

Dr. Brian Anderson, a dentist from Trinity in Ishpeming was the lead dentist of the clinic. This is what he said of his experience in Dar es Salaam:

“This was my second mission trip to the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. My second experience was reaffirming of our synod’s work with our Tanzanian brothers and sisters. It is often said and thought that we give so



much when we go and do our dental work there - and that is true, we do give a lot of our time and expertise, however, we always receive and continue to receive so much more and learn so much from the amazing people of Tanzania. It is truly a blessing that we are provided with so many patients that have needs which we are able to care for while at the Mtoni clinic. While we

cannot treat everyone, we are able to get so many people out of pain and infection. I often look to God and ask what I can do to use my hands to help and He provides so many opportunities for me to use my time and talents to help people in our local area as well as help our friends of the ECD in Tanzania.

I continue to be amazed with the great display of faith while attending church services with our companion congregation, Tabata Shule. Worshiping with our companion is an amazing opportunity to see the amazing reach of God's work throughout the world and how two different cultures can come together to celebrate a common belief/faith."

Dr. Bruce Anderson from Faith Lutheran in Sault Ste. Marie worked at the clinic this July for the first time. No stranger to ministry and the work of Jesus around the world, Dr. Anderson wrote this about his experience in Tanzania:

"Patients were seen from July 10 – July 14. A great variety of dental exams, fillings, and surgical treatments were provided to the population. The patients were appreciative and we were able to work with two additional local dentists and the clinic health staff.



It was a great pleasure to help any and all patients that arrived at the clinic. Meals were provided by the staff, and other staff helped to see patients and prepare them for various dental procedures. I enjoyed working in the clinic very much and hope to return

soon. My adopted congregation, Tabata, was awesome and their faith was overwhelming. I appreciated everything that they did for me. I made some wonderful friends in the congregation."

Dr. Daniele Anderson, a professor of Public Health, wife of Dr. Brian Anderson, and member of Trinity in Ishpeming, speaks of her experience. She made her second trip to Tanzania having traveled to the country with a previous synod project group in 1999 as a youth to assist in the construction work at the Kisarawe School. She said:

"Many Americans struggle to hear God when he speaks. Often, later, upon reflection an 'aha' moment occurs and one realizes God's words. It can be frustrating during this time of uncertainty. For me, time spent thousands of miles away from the 'noise' of my life created a clear path for God's words to be heard. Tanzanians showed me how they live their life for Christ while we (I) find myself getting caught up in life and trying to make

time for Christ. Each day in Tanzania was a blessing being surrounded by and hearing God's love through the words and actions of those we encountered.

It has been difficult to come back to America with its current social and political environment and block out all the 'noise.' How can I keep God's voice strong and not fade back to a whisper, sometimes too soft to hear? By remembering our brothers and sisters example in Tanzania, being thankful for their teaching, and bathing Christ's love, patience, and acceptance, knowing we are all God's children.

Another participant in the ministry at Mtoni Clinic was Michelle Johnson, who is a nursing professor at Northern Michigan University in Marquette. She also had a powerful experience at the clinic and with our brothers and sisters in Dar es Salaam. She writes:



"I have always kept my beliefs about religion within my church family. I have not been good about sharing the word of God with anyone else beside that family. One of the things that I will always carry with me is the way people in Tanzania express their love of God openly and without hesitation or judgement about their beliefs. Song and dance are openly means of expressing this love, whereas we tend to be less demonstrative about it. Although I will not change this in myself overnight, I hope that I will become more open about the church and be able to share beyond my safe zone of my church family.

I also found that no matter how much or little people have they are always willing to share with you what they have been given. This is another area in which we as Americans can learn and not think about our "possessions" that we own, but what God has given us to share with others.

Thank you for allowing me to take place in this experience and I know that I will return again one day. "

Stephanie Smith assisted at the dental clinic and provides this insight into the Tanzanian faith building experience.

"I have always had a burn in my heart to go on a mission trip and for either life events, family, work or other unforeseen circumstances, it just never happened prior to this trip....I had some moments of worry, anxiety and sadness that I was leaving my husband

and 4 children, but I knew I needed to be on this trip. The calming that God continued to provide me is beyond words. Before I knew it, I was on my way to Africa.

God may have used me to help with providing dental services to the Tanzanians, but he used the Tanzanians to work on my heart, mind and body. I witnessed faith stronger than any church I have walked into in America, I cried tears of joy from the harmonious sounds of choirs lifting up their hearts, hands and lives to God. I tear up just taking myself back to those moments I felt almost my entire trip. I became part of so many families while there; church, home, work and a fellow Tanzanian. The way that Tanzanians love, care and pray for others is unmatched. A part of my heart will forever be there. Witnessing the impoverished communities, but yet knowing their faith is so strong that they sustain on knowing that God will provide and does is beyond amazing. Their commitment to God and their church is something every American can learn from. I left Tanzania humbled, full of appreciation, loved and strong in the faith. He continued to work with every conversation I had, handshake and hug I shared and smiles I received. This was my first trip to Tanzania, but not my last.”

Assisting at the clinic was Ardith Moore who shares these thoughts:

“There were many blessings during our time in Tanzania that started the minute we landed. The first thing I felt, having been there before, was the familiarity of the love from all of the Tanzanians at the airport who were there to greet and welcome us. They are so genuinely happy we have come and they express it like no one I’ve ever visited! It felt like “coming home”.

I gained even more respect and love for the people of Tanzania, and they re-ignited a joy in me that I didn’t even realize had been buried as I went about my day-to-day life in America. I left more of my heart with them, which I hope to visit again. God willing!

I am one of many God loves and I have a place in this world. I was reminded to continually look to God for what I am supposed to be doing and that he is always with me. When we pray in Tanzania, it is clear that the intention behind the prayer is that God has already answered it.”

Diana Herington, Luanne’s sister visited Tanzania with us. She writes,

“At the farewell luncheon held on July 21, 2017, at the Eastern and Coastal Diocese (ECD), Bishop Thomas Skrenes addressed the group regarding “sustainability”. In this, he referred to the future of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania as it related to sustainability of membership; sustainability of, their huge churches and investment facilities; sustainability of program such as the Mkuza Women’s Center, Mtoni and Mtoni Phase II, and



Kisarawe Lutheran Jr. Seminary, and other programs; sustainability of the vision to expand health care by building hospitals; and sustainability of the relationship between the Northern Great Lakes Synod and the EDC.



As Bishop Skrenes was talking, I began to reflect on his words and what they meant to me. Visiting Tanzania has truly been an enlightening experience. To see the joy, excitement and love the people have for God and their willingness to share and witness this love has been inspirational and moving. The kindness, generosity, and hospitality of the people is felt in every hug, smile, and touch. It is also felt through the words they speak, which I don't understand, but do know their meaning as they communicate this love. This unconditional acceptance, a gift from God, has touched my heart beyond measure

and given me renewal of my own faith. So, in listening to Bishop Skrenes speak about sustainability, I must say that visiting Tanzania and its people has renewed, revived, recharged and continues to “sustain” my personal faith journey.

## Pastoral Visits

In many ways this summer's trip was a pastoral visit. As a bishop of a companion synod and spouse, we spent much of our days with the people and pastors of the diocese. At the dedication of the new church at Mwenge, I had the privilege of preaching the sermon “New Church – Old Mission” based on the Great commission of Matthew 28:18-20. We are called to preach the old story of God and His love while living in the promise of God's presence in our midst.

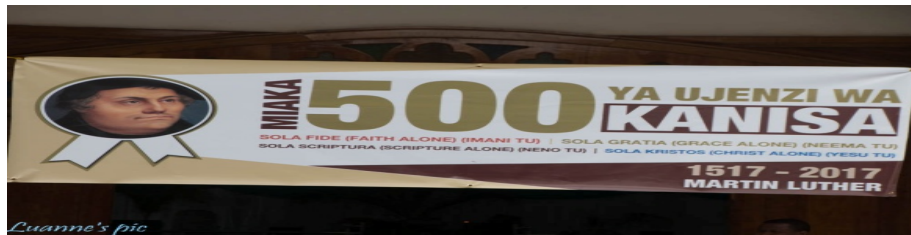
The worship service of dedication was fabulous as seven choirs sang during worship. Bishop Alex Malasusa dedicated the building in Mwenge in this five hour worship. About sixty pastors from the diocese were in attendance with well over one thousand people attending the church service.

A pastor's funeral is always a moving experience. Pastors preach that death does not have the last word and so when the preacher



who has died is young and successful with a young family, the faith of the whole community is tested. Witnessing to the resurrection about seventy-five pastors and at least a thousand laity from the diocese gathered at Kijitoyama parish to remember God's promises to Pastor Alex Shimoka. Pastor Shimoka was forty two years of age and leaves in this life a wife and four small children. The family was dressed in white. At the three hour funeral service, five choirs sang and Bishop Malasusa preached a message of confidence in God's grace. Bishop Skrenes spoke, reminding the Tanzanians that when one suffers, all suffer, standing together in the name of Jesus.

The companion congregation of Immanuel in Negaunee is Yombo Parish in Dar. We had the joy of visiting with the congregation and leading worship on Sunday July 16<sup>th</sup>. What a place of music and joy! In front of the altar hanging in the center of the church is a banner celebrating the 500 years of the Lutheran Reformation. The banner reads "Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Christ Alone."



This congregation is taking seriously the celebration of the Reformation. There were about 750 people in worship this morning including about 250 Sunday School students. What is obvious about the Tanzanian congregations compared to ours is the great number of children and young people present in the average Tanzanian congregation. The congregation has five great choirs. Especially impressive is their youth choir made up of 24 young people (approximate ages 16-25.)



## ELCT-Growth of Dioceses and Growing Pains of the Church



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania continues to grow. In the sixteen years since our first visit (the summer of 2001), the numbers of congregations and members have more than doubled. Today there are about 6.5 million members in twenty-five dioceses of the Tanzanian Lutheran Church. In the last years a number of new dioceses have been formed. Conflict within dioceses and some tribal rivalries have made the creation of these dioceses the best possible alternative. A concern often expressed is the sustainability of these new dioceses. Alternative funding streams are being considered and in some places implemented for synods to provide additional resources.

Congregations in Dar es Salaam are building office space to rent commercially. Several larger and more affluent congregations have built significant multi-story buildings for rental income. Congregations are finding that this is not without trouble as renters can be difficult. Some congregations are operating pre-schools for the income it generates. Other congregations see the establishment of schools as a part of their mission in the community.

The diocese has chartered a bank. It is called the Maendeleo Bank. Maendeleo means “development” in Swahili. The bank manager seems to be a poised, mission driven administrator. According to him and their annual report, the bank is doing very well, making a profit ahead of its business plan. The diocese owns about a fourth of the bank with some stock ownership by the European based mission group, “United Evangelical Ministry.” Individuals own the remainder of the bank stock. An insurance agency has now been added to the bank corporate structure. The Manager believes the national church will soon adopt the Maendeleo Bank as the official bank of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania which will allow the bank to open branches in various parts of the country. Banking in a developing country can be a very difficult and losses can happen. However, this could be an important income stream for the diocese in the years ahead.



The explosive growth of the church in Tanzania has several components. First, people see the church as a place of hope and help. The study of Scripture is valued. People talk about their relationship to the Lord Jesus and consider God central to their lives. Second, the Church provides a sense of community. The Church is a place where fellowship and relationships develop. Persons who move from the villages see the Church in Dar Es Salaam as a place where they can feel at home especially in a changing culture. And third, as thousands of people move to the cities every year from rural Africa, the church seeks to meet the needs of these newly urbanized city residents.



The medical directorate of the diocese is working to build a hospital. Several years ago the Kimara Parish decided to build a hospital on its own initiative. The social ministry minded



congregation felt a hospital was needed and without much planning or coordination with the diocese began to build a building. At the Diocese General Convention last December the diocese adopted a resolution accepting responsibility for its construction and operation. The Diocese Health Directorate is now beginning to form the necessary planning and managing boards. These people have a vision for a hospital!

## Two Powerful Movements

Tanzania Lutheranism is changing. Affecting all Christian groups is a rising Pentecostalism. Complete with “speaking in tongues,” healings and other miracles, this force has taken root in many churches. The Kimara parish, the largest worshiping community in the Diocese with about 6,000 people at weekly worship has almost non-stop usage of their church sanctuary.

I asked Pastor Wilbrecht Mastai why his Kimara Church was growing and he said it was the use of Healing services and the acceptance of ecstatic speech.



“Morning Glory” is now widely used as the name of a daily morning worship service conducted by several of the diocese churches. I preached at Azania Front Cathedral for their one hour worship service at 6:00 a.m. on a weekday. About 500 to 600 people were present. After strong congregational singing and my message, there was a period of loud “talking in tongues.” After the service an man who introduced himself as an attorney, arguing a case before the Supreme court of Tanzania that day, asked me to pray for justice in his case. Right there in the cathedral we were on our knees, laying hands on his Court brief, praying that God’s will be done.



Kijitoyama parish also has Morning Glory’ and “Evening Glory” each day led by the same pastor. Members of the congregation tell me it is growing the congregation as hundreds try to get into the packed sanctuary.

What seems like a related issue is the use of “Prosperity Gospel” preaching by some of the clergy. While this is across denominational lines, it is now part of some Lutheran church experiences. “Prosperity Gospel” is a concept that God loves a generous giver so much that his blessings to us are a direct result in how much we offer to God. This issue will need to be addressed by the Lutheran church in Tanzania over the next years.

## The Work of Education in the Diocese Kisarawe, Mkuza and Mtoni Diaconic Center Phase II



The amount of energy expended by the Tanzanian Church to the ministry of education is a sign of the importance the Church places on educating the next generation. The Diocese operates three secondary schools including the Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary with which our synod has had a long relationship.



At the Management Meeting of the Diocese Senior leaders on July 19<sup>th</sup> at the Bwaloni Subparish, it was shared that the Kisarawe School currently has 400 students with a capacity of 610. Lately, the School has had good national examination results but not excellent ones. There is a problem retaining students to graduate. The current slowdown in the Tanzanian economy is cited as a reason that students are not studying at Kisarawe in desired numbers. Also it was learned at the Management Meeting that there is a considerable debt against the Kisarawe School which has had a problem “breaking even” in operational costs.





When we were at Kisarawe, we noticed the continuing issues the School has with maintenance of its buildings. The toilets and showers in the new dormitories are not in full use because of the lack of sufficient water pressure. Many of the buildings could use paint. The computer lab is not in use because of computer disrepair. Yet the kitchen is in operation and there seems to be a positive spirit among the faculty and student body. The

current headmaster at Kisarawe is Pastor Henry Mnuka. The students and teachers at Kisarawe honored us all with a banquet and a retirement program and gifts for all.

There is less concern about the sustainability of the Mkuza Girls School. It has less outstanding debt than Kisarawe. There are about 210 students enrolled currently, short of the 260 capacity. The most current national examinations were excellent for the Mkuza girls. The faculty, administration and the diocese seems very positive about the school's future.



A number of new buildings have been built in the past two years at Mkuza including a second dormitory, a science block of classrooms and an administrative building. We dedicated a new auto van bought in part by the gifts of the women of our Northern Great Lakes Synod. The Mkuza headmaster, Lilian Sikawa has a vision for a dynamic premier school.

Another secondary school called “Shine” has yet to be started. Funding is an issue. It is uncertain whether, or if, the school will begin operation.

Caroline Shedafa is a German national married to a Tanzanian resident. She is employed by the Eastern and Coastal Diocese to manage a new education program called Mtoni Diaconic Center Phase II at Mlandizi. Mtoni Diaconic Center is a model school for the education of developmentally disabled children. The new Phase II Program's purpose will be to train disabled young adults who have graduated from Mtoni for work and self-sustainability. Property has been acquired for the school and the first building on the campus built. Funding is an issue and the Diocese is working with its European partners. The national government is interested in this project and may fund part of it.

## **TUDARCO-Tumaini University Dar es Salaam Campus**

A matter of considerable concern for the diocese is the financial stability and sustainability of the Lutheran University "TUDARCO-Tumaini University Dar es Salaam Campus." When I was last in Dar in December 2014, the new ten story class and office building for the college was not yet open. The building is impressive. It seems, however, that the new building has had significant structural problems. Water damage in the building's basement has made the library unable to be moved to that space. Decreasing numbers of students has made the budget for the school difficult. The college could not make its mortgage payments beginning in March of this year so the diocese has now made the payments and is anxious to find a solution to the funding issue. One solution advanced by the senior administrators at the college is for the congregations to more directly fund the school. The diocese has begun a capital funding campaign to benefit all of its secondary schools and the university.

The Tumaini University-Dar es Salaam has fifty-three faculty and ninety-five employees in total. Student fees are about \$1000 a year for tuition. I asked the administrators what they hoped Tuimani-Dar es Salaam would look like in ten years. They said they wanted the school to be a known as a research institution with more published faculty, a consultant service provider for the community, known to the nation as a center of excellence and to have more students. They also wanted the school to maintain its Christ centered ethos and to improve its science based curriculum, perhaps adding medicine as a major. They also wanted the school to have a better relationship with private corporations and the government and they need all of this to be paid for in a sustainable way. Apparently, further complicating the university situation is the federal government's recent decisions to not fund private education with federal guaranteed loans for students. The government controls the colleges (even this private one) determining curriculum, standards and calendar without providing subsidies.

## Building the Nation



The Tanzanian Lutheran Church considers itself as important to the building of the nation. Dr. Victoria Kisyombe is a world respected leader in economic sustainability. Her awards from the World Bank and the Clinton Foundation for his efforts at micro-lending for woman in Tanzania are changing lives and creating a future for thousands of people.

We had the pleasure of meeting several of Dr. Kisyombe's clients while in dar es Salaam. They are tailors, T-Shirt makers, beauty schools, wedding boutique owners and managers of domesticated farm animals and a host of other small business operators. Selfina is her corporation which loans money to women entrepreneurs. It is today providing employment for thousands of people. Dr. Kisyombe and her staff manage this work believing the work of the church includes giving economic hope.



## Future of our Companionship

For a quarter century the people of the Northern Great Lakes Synod and the Eastern and Coastal Diocese have worked to build and enjoy a relationship built on the baptismal connection as sisters and brothers. Our companionship has grown. It is now an important ministry of both of our churches. What will our relationship look like in another 25 years?



Bishops, pastors and laity in all of our churches come and go over the years. The Biblical mandate to "love one another" remains. The call of Jesus to "go and make disciples of all nations" continues to be both our challenge and our work. As we continue to serve God in both Tanzania and in the United States, we are comforted by the assurance of Jesus himself who said to us as the last words of the Gospel of Matthew, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet, I wrote:

“There is a lively sense of hope in great evidence in Tanzania. Church statistics speak volumes as worship attendance and membership increase each and every year. There are dynamic mission starts and new outreach opportunities everywhere. Tanzanian Lutherans smile and laugh and are eager to tell us how God is moving in their congregations and in their own lives. The joy of the Gospel is clear!

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has its own serious issues. Any person active in our churches knows the challenges we face. Yet, God can do great things. One pastor told me that perhaps if our problems were bigger in the ELCA we would be growing! Miracles do happen. God is not done with us yet as a Church or as a synod. How can we continue to learn from our Tanzanian sisters and brothers? How can we listen to God calling us forward together? What good things will God do in your congregation? In you?”

## **Mutual Sharing of Gifts**

Luanne Skrenes

St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans (Romans 1:8-12): First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world... For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.”

In the last eighteen years as bishop’s spouse, I have traveled seven times to our brothers and sisters in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese (ECD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), coordinating most of these trips and many more for the people of the Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLS). Each trip has been different from the other. These immersions into the culture and community of our companions in Africa renew in my faith, energize to serve God and our Church, and strengthen me to more boldly proclaim my faith in Jesus Christ.





On each of these trips the people of the NGLS has brought with them a gift to share, such as dental expertise, medical knowledge and skills, relationship building, or administrative gifts to further the work of our partnership. During each of these trips our travelers tell me that the Tanzanians have many more gifts to share with us. They have much to teach us about tuning out the busyness of our lives and tuning into the Word of God. They demonstrate daily that the

‘things’ they own are not their possessions but gifts from God to be shared no matter how poor they may be. The Tanzanians have pure joy in the simple things and in knowing that they have a God that loves them and provides for their every need. Hospitality, generosity, and kindness to the stranger in their midst and to the community are spiritual gifts they have from which we can learn much. Once you experience this, it becomes a part of you. It becomes something that you do not want to ever lose. It is pure gratitude and absolute joy for all God has done. So as Paul writes in his letter to the Romans we each have gifts to share and we are mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.

Often when we visit the Mtoni Dispensary (clinic) we are privileged to participate in an anti-malaria bed netting distribution. The NGLS began a campaign years ago to help fight this deadly disease in Dar es Salaam. The nets are given to anyone in the community, no matter their religion. It’s always one of the highlights of my experiences there to see our dollars saving lives.



“Overwhelmed and with heartfelt thanks to God for the work of our third dental clinic” comes to mind as I reflect on the week-long service we offered “bega kwa bega” or “shoulder to shoulder” with the Tanzanians. Once again, the diocese provided dentists to work alongside our team. The Eastern and Coastal Diocese planned to continue this work into the next week after our departure.





It is our hope that they continue on a regular basis the use of the equipment so generously donated by the people of the NGLS offering year around care to their people. Dr. Jim Hayward, who was instrumental in coordinating the first dental clinic, has graciously donated his dental instruments towards this goal. If the diocese can sustain this project, we will need to develop a way to provide the Eastern and Coastal Diocese with supplies to accomplish this goal.

To fully experience Tanzania and God's creation there is to also go on an animal safari. Often, we leave our bishop in Dar es Salaam to work while I accompany the groups to the game parks in the north. As with our time in the diocese, each safari is the same, but yet different from the other. This last safari was one of the best as we saw in their own habitat all of the 'big five' (lion, cape buffalo, elephant, cheetah, and rhinoceros). A visit to a Maasai tribe is a favorite stopping place where we learn about the culture of these nomadic people.

To fully experience Tanzania and God's creation there is to also go on an animal safari. Often, we leave our bishop in Dar es Salaam to work while I



Some ask me why is it that I spend so much time and energy coordinating these trips. My answer is that while, yes, these are 'trips,' they are so much more. They are faith building 'experiences.' For me to see anew our companion relationship, the deep love of Jesus in the people and the gifts the Tanzanians have to share with us, through the eyes and experiences of others makes it all worth-while. Hearing the faith stories of our travelers during and after their experiences brings tears to my eyes. I thank God that he called me to serve Him in this way.

I have come to realize I left a part of my heart in Tanzania on our first trip in 2001. With re-entry to the U.S. each time I seem to find it more difficult to come home and leave this faith-filled, Christ-centered, hospitable culture behind me. I pray that I won't get swept back into the busyness of my life where these experiences wither away to a faint memory of a 'trip.' I thank God for these opportunities and pray that I will not ever take them for granted.



Each time I come home saying to our African friends, “Rafiki zangu Mungu awabariki mileli!” or “Dear friends, may God bless you forever!”

## Thank you

We thank God for the mature leadership of Bishop Alex Malasusa. He is committed to this ministry. The Bishop's leadership team including the Diocese General Secretary Godfrey Nkini was instrumental in this visit being successful. We thank God also for Robert Charles from the diocese for his planning work. Dr. Victoria Kisyonbe and the others elders from Kijitoyama Parish were very important and great hosts. We thank God for their hospitality. May Jesus Christ be praised!



**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA**  
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21<sup>st</sup> July 2017

**Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes**  
**Northern Great Lakes Synod –ELCA**  
**1029N. Third Street, Suite A-Marquette, MI 49855**  
**USA**

Dear Bishop Skrenes,

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Savior!

As we celebrate 25 years of companionship between the Eastern and Coastal Diocese and the Northern Great Lakes Synod in 2017, we would wish to thank our Living God for working together as brothers and Sisters for a quarter of a century. We value the companionship as a special gift from God.

During all these years of working together we at the ECD have received various things which have covered areas of preaching, education, serving the community and exchange of information

We have always been so pleased to work with someone who encourages and works for the success of others. We have always appreciated your numerous gifts which have enabled the Eastern and Coastal Diocese to provide services to those in need. We are so grateful for your generous commitment both in-kind and monetary.

The over 200,000 members of our Diocese have during the period witnessed the presence of your Synod through yourself, the work crew, the on-going Parish – to- Parish Partnership, the Kisarawe Seminary infrastructure development, the Mkuza Girls development, the Mtoni health services, prayers and other generous gifts. We also appreciated the efforts you made in collaboration with NGLS that made it possible for ECD to be incorporated in the development project that was guaranteed by US Aid through ASHA for the development of Kisarawe Seminary infrastructure. All these have truly brought hope to the Mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. The people in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese consider this kind of partnership as holistic and very appropriate.

We wish to express our appreciation to you personally Bishop Skrenes, your wife Luanne and your administration for the wonderful success we have achieved at the Eastern and Coastal Diocese. We would like therefore to request you to accept our deepest gratitude for your involvement in the following activities at the ECD amongst others:

**(1) Parish – to – parish partnership**

As you may have noted, the NGLS and ECD were able to establish Parish to Parish partnership which has enabled the people in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese to share and exchange experiences between the two different cultures and were able to live together as brothers and Sisters.

**(2) Exchange program**

The exchange program has been an incredible human gift as through sharing both the clergy and non clergy at the ECD have acquired knowledge in various areas which have enabled the Diocese to flourish.

**(3) The infrastructure development at Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary**

The Eastern and Coastal Diocese will never forget your very high level of commitment to the Seminary, and especially your connection to the USA/ASHA, this has significantly changed the outlook of the School from a modest school to a high class school in the country.

**(4) Support for Maternal and Malaria program in the health directorate**

During the period of working together we have experienced the extraordinary commitment and involvement of the people in your Synod in the health sector, we particularly wish to thank your wife Luanne for her vigorous championship in the Maternal and Malaria support at the Diocesan health facilities.

**(5) The establishment and support of Dental campaign**

We are very thankful for the provision of high quality of professional Dental services at Mtoni Health Centre by experts from the Northern Great Lakes Synod. The surrounding community at Temeke District and beyond have benefitted from this super standard dental care clinic and treatment together with eye clinics and provision of reading glasses.

**(6) The enhancement of Mkuza Girls' School program**

We wish to thank you and your wife for your serious commitment to the development of the Mkuza Girls School. You have been an important instrument of mobilization of funds for the development of infrastructure at the school. Part of the results of your commitment was witnessed during the inauguration of Mkuza Girls School Vehicle at Mbezi Beach Parish which was partly financed by the people of your Synod. The inauguration of the vehicle which was conducted by yourself on 8/7/2017 is yet another sign of the good co-operation between the ECD and NGLS.

**(7) The support of training Teachers for Kisarawe Seminary**

We are very grateful that five teachers have been trained in English Language, Mathematics and Computer Sciences through this program. 90% of the teachers are still working with the Seminary. This program has accelerated the academic achievement of the School. Currently three Pastors are in Universities undertaking English & History, Christian education and Science

subjects, the Diocese has plans to use these Pastors as teachers at Kisarawe, thus adding value to the Seminary by having additional well trained academic staff.

**(8) Facilitation of a Seminar for ECD Women Pastors**

As you may very well remember, during your tenature in office a seminar for ECD Women Pastors was organised and facilitated by then your Assistant Bishop Rev Katherine Finegan. The seminar which was conducted on 19th- 20th June 2014 in Bagamoyo town was quite instrumental to the Pastors as it strengthened their capacities and rejuvenated their spiritual life together with working attitudes.

In the meantime, the Eastern and Coastal Diocese believes that, this is just a start of a greater companionship between the NGLS and our ECD and between yourself as a retired Bishop and the Diocese. At this juncture, we would wish to assure the Bishop elect that the Eastern and Coastal Diocese has been pleased and comfortable working with the Northern Great Lakes Synod. It is our great hope that we will see another 25 years and more of mutual co-operation. We pray for the grace of our Lord that this dream comes true so that we may also continue to carry further the Lords' Mission.

Once again, we wish thank you personally Bishop Skrenes and your wife Luenna together with your family and all members of the Northern Great Lakes Synod for the great support and affection we have shared together during your term as Bishop of the Synod.

As you retire as Bishop, we pray for your good health so that you may continue to be energized and continue serving the Lord and accomplish the good work that the lord has bestowed within you. At the same time, we wish to assure the incoming Bishop of our continued good co-operation and Partnership during her tenature. May our faithful God bless you, your family and the people of the North Great Lakes Synod.

  
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Bishop Dr. Alex G. Malasusa  
BISHOP- ELCT-ECD

Evangelical Lutheran Church  
In Tanzania  
Eastern and Coastal Diocese  
P. O. Box 837, Dar es salaam

**Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary**  
**Poem to Bishop Thomas Skrenes**  
**“Good Deeds are Recorded”**  
**July 2017**

It's God's intention  
To record good deeds  
In His book of deeds.  
Thus, whoever does good deeds,  
They will be recorded

Good deeds are of value  
Even if you don't notice.  
They were the one  
Which convinced God  
To save Cornelius  
And include him in His kingdom

Kisarawe community is different  
It cannot manage not to speak  
What was done by your hands.  
Rather, it has to witness what you did.  
Which have become and will be  
memorable  
In the minds of us and our children.

Bishop Thomas Skrenes  
Who does not know that,  
You were and still  
A bishop of actions  
And not speaking.

You really had a vision and mission  
However the vision was really from God  
himself.  
Thus you did not only do you work  
But also you fulfilled God's work.

No one is not aware  
With the works of your hands  
Here at Kisarawe seminary.  
You built Heaven.  
You built Thomas Skrenes dormitory,  
A dormitory named after your name.  
Really, you worked hard.

The works of your hands  
Have ensured home to the young ones  
Who will become ministers of tomorrow,  
Presidents of tomorrow,  
Pastors of tomorrow,  
And many others as God wishes.

Sincerely speaking, you have come  
With the word of God  
Which says anyone  
Who will take care  
Among these young, have served God  
himself  
Thus you were serving God, not people  
And as a result you have a part  
In God's kingdom.

We had the information  
From the whispering wind  
That you are now retiring.  
What comes to our mind  
Is that you are only retiring from the  
position  
But not God's call.

It is our hope that  
You will continue  
Manifesting the fruits of the Holy Spirit  
Which are kept obvious to us  
In the book of Galatians 5:22  
Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness  
Goodness, Faithfulness

We reached the end of our poem.  
We put down our pens  
And wish you farewell, good health  
God bless you and your family.  
God bless Kisarawe.  
God bless the whole world.