

REFLECTIONS ON OUR SEPTEMBER 2019 TRIP
Eastern and Coastal Diocese Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
Rev. Tom and Luanne Skrenes

When we first went to Tanzania in 2001 the population of the country was 35 million people. Today the population is estimated to be 60 million. Since 2001, the city of Dar es Salaam has almost doubled in size from 3.4 million people to about 6.4 million. The population of the country is growing more than 3% a year with the median age being 18, compared to 38 years of age in the United States. With huge population growth, the need for infrastructure of all types (schools, medical care, roads, sewers and drinking water, etc.) in Tanzania is overwhelming.

The president of the nation is John Magufuli. There is among our church people in Tanzania broad disagreement on the success of his work since he has been president. President Magufuli is credited with an anti-corruption campaign within the government and most people applaud the considerable new highway construction in and around the large cities.



Some business people believe he is seeking to control the economy, reducing investment and stifling growth in the private sector. He has been criticized by western governments for his authoritarian instincts which manifest themselves in the suppression of free speech and the freedom of the press. There has been the arrest of at least one Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) pastor which has been criticized openly by the Tanzanian Conference of Lutheran Bishops.

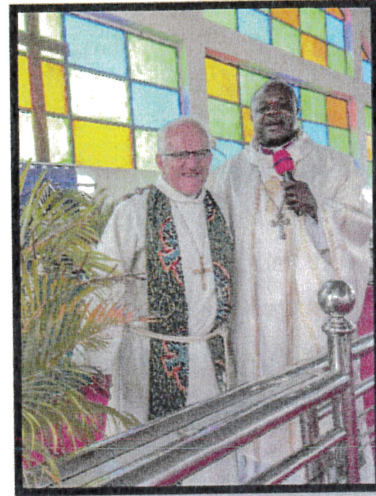
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA

The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is the Rt. Rev. Dr. Fredrick Onael Shoo. He was re-elected to his second and final four year term as presiding bishop this year. At a choir concert in Dar es Salaam a visiting ELCT bishop told me (Tom) that his election “was a very anxious time and the election was less than smooth.”

This was the first trip that we have made to the church in Tanzania since 2009 that there was not any discussion or even mention of the ELCA policy on sexuality.

EASTERN AND COASTAL DIOCESE

Bishop Alex Malasusa is now in his fifteenth year as bishop of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese (ECD). Since the beginning of 2019 there have been two major changes in the senior management team of the Diocese. Comelord Swai, long time Treasurer has ended his ministry with the Diocese and is now working in his own business. The new Treasurer is Emmanuel Msangi. A new General Secretary has been named and is in office. Dr. Emmanuel Luvanda replaced Godfrey Nkini who retired. The new General Secretary has made “sustainability” a priority, requiring long range planning for all the departments of the Diocese.



We sense that the financial situation in the Diocese is a continuing struggle. The Diocese has almost 900 employees, including pastors, evangelists and church workers of every congregation, the 100+ staff of the Tumaini University-Dar es Salaam College (TuDarco) University and all of the secondary schools, clinics and social ministry organizations in the Diocese. Staff costs are a burden.

There is much talk about increasing income to the Diocese in the hope of self-sustainability. The latest new stream of income for the Diocese is tree farms. There are two land plots, each several hundred acres that are being managed in the expectation that the sale of wood products will benefit the Diocese. Eucalyptus trees planted for utility poles and Teak trees planted for furniture are being grown. The Swedish Church has supported this work with grants and technical support. It will be several years before there is any positive impact on the financial situation of the Diocese.

The growth of the Charismatic movement within the ECD is both promise and potentially a divisive issue within the Church. The growth of Pentecostalism in the developing world is well documented. Speaking in tongues, healings, driving out demons and other behaviors are practiced within some congregations of the the ELCT. The two largest congregations in the Diocese, Kimara and Kijitonyama have dynamic pastors who are totally enmeshed in this type of ministry. We attended worship service at both places and experienced this full blown Pentecostal movement first hand.

A few observations:

1. The music and preaching was much too loud. With electronic amplification it was physically uncomfortable to withstand the noise. The sound system was overwhelming. We heard that neighbors to the churches are complaining to the government about the volume of noise.
2. The pastor is in control. Both pastors at Kimara and Kijitonyama are young (40's) and obviously "rock stars" to their people. People love them. Both pastors were full of ecstatic speech and moved all over the chancel during the sermon.
3. Driving out of demons and exorcism of evil spirits was part of the worship service. Several people were overcome and "slain in the spirit" requiring assistance from the congregational elders.
4. At Kijitonyama, after three hours of Pentecostal worship we had a communion service. That portion of the worship was very traditional—straight from the ELCT service book. Thousands of people came up for communion. All 27 of the pastors present were needed to distribute communion and to individually bless and pray for those who came to the altar for a blessing. At the end of the six hour worship, when all the congregation of more than 5000 had left, I was asked to individually pray for and bless the pastors. That was a powerful experience for me (Tom) as I laid hands on each one of them with prayer. Some of the pastors I have known for two decades, many I had met for the first time that night.
5. While this Pentecostal movement is popular in many Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches in Tanzania, there are also many in our churches who find reason to oppose it. We heard that members of the Cathedral church of Azania Front are unhappy about this ministry. There was no evidence of Pentecostalism at either the Yombo Church or at Tandika Church where we spent a Sunday each.
6. It remains an open question of whether this Pentecostalism will benefit the Church's work. It does seem to be attracting people to worship but will it yield fruit in the long term? Is this a reform movement or not?

It is obvious that Bishop Malasusa continues to be a leader in ecumenical and interfaith ministries. We were asked to travel to Zanzibar to attend the closing ceremonies of an interfaith conference sponsored by the ECD and the European based United Evangelical Mission

Society. Muslim, Christian (Roman Catholic and Protestant), Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and other faith communities from Europe, Africa and Asia were represented. It was an exciting opportunity to listen to the voices of world religions as well as to see the leadership of the Lutheran churches of Tanzania prominent in this important interfaith ministry.



Educational Institutions of the Diocese

The **Mkuza Girls School** continues to receive and to appreciate deeply the support of the NGLS Women's Organization and contributions made by our congregations and individuals. All of the secondary schools including Mkuza have had enrollment declines. There are 170 students on campus with a student capacity of about 350. The gifts received in the past two years from the Northern Great Lakes Synod were used to facilitate the supplying of water. The head of the school is Acting Headmistress Rev. Grace Mmbaga.

Pastor Mmbaga cited several challenges facing the school including the lack of funds for dining hall, staff houses, administration offices and a dispensary. They are building a security fence which will surround most of their facilities. The school has 11 teachers and 8 support staff.

Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary remains a very important part of the work of the Diocese. Thanks to our synod and the grants secured, the school has the best facilities of all the secondary schools. The acting headmaster is Godfrey Ntekaniwa who participated in an exchange program in our synod in the late 1990's. He taught at Westwood High School in Ishpeming and was a guest of Peter Johnson along with Duane and Rita Palomaki.

Like the other schools of the Diocese, Kisarawe is struggling with enrollment numbers. There are only 260 students enrolled today, a large decline from the 450 a few years ago and more than that a few years before. The government's decision to offer free public education to all of Tanzania has affected enrollment in the church schools. The government is currently not

providing university scholarships to church school graduates. The country's economic malaise has especially affected the private schools as parents choose the public system.

The buildings at Kisarawe show wear. For example the newest dormitory for boys has broken window screens. We observed monkeys entering the building through these broken screens. There is water running to the dormitories but the water pressure is low. Kisarawe is in great need of a science laboratory.

Several times we heard how appreciative the Diocese was for the funding and grant seeking leadership provided by our Synod. The staff is concerned that should enrollment decline further, teachers will be laid off. The average monthly salary of a teacher is about \$350. Support staff at Kisarawe makes about \$150 a month. The teaching staff seems bright and engaged. The chaplain is new to Kisarawe. He has about ten years of parish experience. His English skills are very good.

The school staff appreciates Finlandia University's annual May trips led by Dr. Rene' Johnson. Gifts from Finlandia purchased four pigs to be raised by the students in another attempt at sustainability.

We also visited the **Secondary School at Mbwawa**. It is a struggling place with 110 students and 9 teachers. The facilities are poorly developed. The mission of this secondary school is to help students who are not considered the best academically prepared when they enter.

In November national examinations will occur and the Diocese schools are praying for excellent results. The key to recruiting students for the schools is good test scores. The results of the examinations will be available in January as schools are ranked from top to bottom.



Mtoni Center for Special Needs is one of the few schools in Tanzania dedicated to serve children with mental developmental issues. The institution has 85 residents in the Monday through Friday program. There are 51 boys and 34 girls. Boys are more likely to be seen as candidates for the school as many girls with disabilities are kept home to work with their mothers in the house. Mtoni also has a program for children who remain home and an outreach program by the staff who visits them. Tuition is minimal. The school receives salary grants by the federal government and raises money with

handiwork projects (door mats, fabrics, etc.) produced by the students.

Mlandizi Vocational Center is project for vocational training for graduates of the Mtoni Center. This will also be a training center for those who did not pass their national exams and are not eligible for university education. Students will be taught basic life and vocational skills and will be employed at hotels and other institutions in Dar es Salaam. Caroline Shedafa, working under a grant from the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) is leading the project. Caroline does excellent work. There are several buildings now in place for the Center but a starting date for the training program to open has yet to be determined.

Medical Ministries of the Diocese

(Luanne's Report to the Synod Companion Committee)

Mtoni Medical Clinic is set in a very poor area of Dar es Salaam. The medical clinic struggles with low patient numbers. In an attempt to be sustainable and to increase patient numbers work is being done for the clinic to certify with the government and be national health care accredited. Since our last visit in 2017 the clinic has improved its physical facilities with updated equipment and should be available for maternal deliveries soon.

Mtoni Dental Clinic

Upon the request of our Companion Synod Committee we met with Euniace Bandio (Assistant in the Diocese office), the clinic staff, and the financial person of the Mtoni Clinic. We discussed the current state of the clinic, their hopes for the future, and the dental proposal. In our

discussion these points were made:



1. The Diocese wants the dental clinic to be self-sustaining.
2. The dispensary is not yet an accredited Health Center. In order to be accredited they need to be more proficient with their laboratory services, have a more complete pharmacy and provide 24/7 maternal services. The German Church has supported the maternity services with equipment, education, and grants.
3. They soon should have secured three phase electrical power supply to the clinic.
4. The Mtoni team was very positive towards the dental clinic proposal drafted by Drs. Danielle and Brian Anderson for a two year commitment to help fund the

dental work. Prior to our leaving we were told that the General Secretary wanted the ECD legal counsel to review and approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) developed from the Drs. Anderson's proposal and that they would send the document soon after our return to the U.S. Since our return we met with Drs. Brian and Danielle Anderson to update them on this meeting and the MOU.

Companion Congregation Interest

(Luanne's Report to the Synod Companion Committee)

Tandika Church companionship is with Faith Lutheran Church, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

While in Tanzania, we were told that Bishop Malasusa wanted us to worship at a church with a companion in the NGLS whose relationship needs to be energized. The leadership at the ECD office decided this congregation should be Tandika Lutheran, a partner with Faith, Sault Ste. Marie.

We learned of this visit to Tandika less than a week prior to the worship. I (Luanne) emailed the interim pastor at Faith, Rev. Melinda Vander Sys, and Dr. Bruce Anderson (dentist from Faith who joined us on the dental mission in 2017). Pastor Vander Sys wrote a fine letter to Tankika which I read at the worship service.

After the worship service we were hosted to a lunch in their multi-purpose room. The Assistant to the Bishop, Rev. Lwiza, addressed the Tandika leadership encouraging them to work at reestablishing the partnership telling them that "even you can travel to America through this partnership!" It was very apparent that it is their hope to renew this partnership. A bit about Tandika Lutheran Church:

1. It is in a heavily Muslim populated area.
2. The congregation is in a pastoral vacancy at the present time.
3. We were told this is an area of 'transient housing.' Apparently housing in this area is very reasonable. Many people rent here and move out once they are able to afford better housing in Dar es Salaam. Thus the congregational membership is fluid and its growth is difficult.
4. Tandika has two women in place to lead the partnership. One is Rachel Bandio, whose husband, Euniace, works at the Diocese Office and is a member of Temeke Lutheran, a nearby church (partner congregation of Gloria Dei, Hancock). Euniace has traveled to the U.S. through this partnership. The other leader is Lilian Temu (Mfole).

5. I have received several emails from both Lilian Temu (Mafole) and Rachel Bandio.
lilymafole@gmail.com – secretary of the elders council
rachelkokubeelwa@gmail.com --Chair of the Partnership Committee at Tandika.

6.The elders at Tandika informed us that they are in need of church pews as most of their seating is benches without backs. Amplifiers for their musical equipment to accompany the choirs are also a perceived need.

Since our return to the U.S. we have been informed by the Tanzanians that there are other congregations who are requesting a NGLS partner congregation.

Our Ministry Together. For nearly 30 years the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the ELCT and the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the ELCA have had an effective and positive companion relationship. In Tanzania, there is among the Lutheran community universal admiration for our ministry together. The nurturing of this relationship is considered to be very important by Bishop Malasusa, the pastors and other leaders of the Diocese. It is their hope that there will be more visits by congregational members from our Synod's congregations. They also expressed their hope that our Bishop, Assistant to the Bishop, Pastors and other Synod leaders will continue to visit the Eastern and Coastal Diocese to build on this relationship. This is important ministry.



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