



Swanson Family Newsletter

Arusha, Tanzania

December 2017

Wishing you a Merry Christmas & Joyous New Year!

It is a busy season for everyone and our family of 5 is no exception! We are blessed to be reunited with our daughter, Hannah, as she returned from Kenya and together celebrate the birth of Christ as a family.

I love the opportunity to quiet my heart in preparation for the coming of Christ and remember the miraculous event of the incarnation, "God became man and dwelt amongst us." Yet this year I found myself overly busy with the therapeutic feeding program, community outreach, and spending time addressing new problems at work. Steve was spending longer hours in the hospital, as new babies born critically ill or premature were arriving at all hours of the day.

At some point in December, I realized the "quiet, contemplative times of Christmas" was not going to happen as I had expected, and that Christ had come into the world for exactly these overwhelming, troubling situations. We need Him. The world needs Him. The world we live and work in here in Tanzania needs the love and light of God to bring healing and hope into their troubled situations. The premature baby needs breath; she needs oxygen and medication to help her breathe. The malnourished child needs food; the young toddler with TB needs a correct diagnosis and proper dosage of medicine so that he may recover. And they all need hope. They all need compassion. So, I began to take the quiet moments when I could, and see my work as a natural outpouring of the coming of Christ. He came to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted, and we are privileged to be in this place, to do the work of God in this world.

May His peace be upon you in this coming year,

Jodi and Steve Swanson

Like a stone on the surface of a still river

Driving the circles on forever

Redemption breaks through the surface of time

In the cry of a tiny babe.

~Bruce Cockburn, singer/songwriter

The past few months have been quite full and rewarding: travel to South Africa, speaking at CDC conferences in Arusha and Dar es Salaam; team writing a new government neonatology manual—*Care of the Newborn* (130 pages), that will guide Tanzanian hospitals in the care of sick neonates; daily clinics and teaching rounds at 2 hospitals; fund-raising; continued training of Tanzanian interns, doctors, and visiting pediatric residents from Europe and America; and sending two of my finest Tanzanian doctors (that I had mentored for 2+ years) off to Uganda to start a 3-year pediatric residency program.

Our NICU continues to receive considerable attention for the work we are doing in caring for critically ill and preterm newborns, providing a level of care found nowhere else in the country. The baby pictured above was an 800-gram survivor from our NICU.

Below is a link to a 5-minute video that we posted online this month. It's worth watching, as we try to raise awareness of prematurity as the leading cause of global death among small children, what can be possible to save their lives in Tanzania, and celebrate the amazing work that our doctors and NICU nurses are doing.

Every breath counts. No matter how small.

Did you know that prematurity is now the leading global cause of death in children less than 5 years old?

We have a new video posted online: <http://www.vimeo.com/drswanon/breath>

We are supported through the ELCA: <https://community.elca.org/Tanzania>

Photos: ALMC NICU, Selian Lutheran Hospital

Tax deductible contributions for pediatric work can be sent to:

Via Online:

www.tanzanianschildren.org

Via Mail:

information at above website

All funds are received through Global Health Ministries (GHM), and directed in entirety towards clinical pediatric training of doctors and nurses in Tanzania, care of babies in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), medications, bed fees, and food for malnourished children.

Your support makes this work possible!

GHM will send you a tax-deductible receipt.

He won our hearts

In the beginning of October, little Baraka* came to us from a far distance. He was 18 months old, and weighed only 12 pounds. He had not gained weight in 6+ months. His abdomen was significantly distended, and every breath was a struggle. Repeated respiratory infections and malnutrition had deformed the shape of his chest. He was weak and unable to stand. His father had secretly taken him away from his village, bringing him to us out of desperation. The mother and villagers believed he was a cursed child. The father believed differently.

He was diagnosed with pulmonary and extra-pulmonary tuberculosis (abdominal TB) and started on anti-TB medications and entered our feeding program for severely malnourished children. There were many nights I returned home from work, wondering if he would make it through the night. After more than 2 months in our care, he was discharged home. Instead of struggling for oxygen, there were smiles and giggles. It was a great joy to care for him. He continues to be followed up through our program and is doing extremely well.

*child's name has been changed



Kid's Corner



We had a much-needed time away as a family before Christmas and headed to the coast for some beach time! All the kids are now well rested, and preparing for another school term.

Indya, our little fish, is pictured here swimming with a baby jellyfish in a jellyfish pond! Such are the wonders of childhood near the coast of the Indian Ocean. After her ear surgery this past summer, she came down with an infection and perforation this fall which we struggled to treat. In the end, we headed up to Nairobi to see an ENT specialist and with new medication her ear began to heal. Again. We appreciate your ongoing prayers for her health concerns (ear and toe infections, so she needs prayer covering from head to foot!) She has wonderful friends and loves her school. She keeps busy with reading, art, and was a munchkin and flying monkey in the school's production of the Wizard of Oz!



Caedmon also enjoyed the coast with some scuba and free diving, but is pictured here with Steve as they summited Mt. Meru, at 14,980 ft., as part of a celebration of Steve's 50th birthday. Caedmon worked very hard this semester and had a successful semester in academics, earning high honors. He has great friends and will be focusing on swimming and soccer in this new semester.



Hannah has transitioned to Rift Valley Academy in Kenya in her usual flexible and cheerful manner! She has made lots of new friends and is enjoying the cool mountain climate, as well as the new opportunities to grow socially, spiritually, and academically in this new environment. She made friends with the whale sharks on Mafia Island (Tanzania), and enjoyed taking selfies as you can see. It may be that marine photography is in her future! She has enjoyed being home with us, baking Christmas cookies and playing with her dog. She is not looking forward to saying good-bye, but we are confident she will be happy and settle in easily.