



## Swanson Family Newsletter

Arusha, Tanzania

September 2017

Dear friends,

We were grateful to have had an opportunity to share with many congregations and friends this past summer. Thank you for graciously hosting us. There were many more congregations that we were unable to meet with this summer. We hope that we will be able to fill you in through this newsletter. Be sure to note the video link so that you might see the advanced work that has been developed as we care for premature and sick newborns in our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

In the midst of a world facing extreme challenges and political unrest, we pray for the church, that we as a body may be the Lord's hands as we care for those in need around the globe. Food, shelter, and safety seem to be in high demand in these recent times. May we have eyes to see, ears to hear their cries, and willingness to share with those in need.

With grateful hearts for your support,

Steve and Jodi Swanson

See the video on Baby Blessing and the work of our doctors and nurses at: <http://www.vimeo.com/drswanson>

Your support makes our Tanzanian doctor and nursing training, feeding program for malnourished children, and NICU work possible!

<https://51670.thankyou4caring.org/pages/almc-donate>

### An Unexpected Blessing

In late May, a baby was born with severe birth asphyxia at our hospital. It is a sight all too common, as complications of labor occur more frequently in lower-income countries. For the first 10 days following birth, this newborn lay in a state of semi-consciousness, on oxygen, with all feedings by orogastric tube and 3 medications to control his seizures—his body and brain suffering the consequences of perinatal oxygen deprivation because of a difficult birth delivery.

The neonatology nurses and doctors that we have trained worked tirelessly to care for him 24/7... as they do so many babies. And then... nothing short of a miracle occurred. He began to regain increasing levels of alertness, woke up, and transitioned gradually to full breastfeeding. Three weeks after being admitted to the NICU, he was discharged home. I continue to see him monthly in follow-up, and he brings tears to my eyes, as I detect no loss of developmental milestones. His mother has named him, "Blessing".

Blessing is one of over 200 babies that survive each year in our NICU, which is providing the highest level of newborn care currently available in Tanzania.



**ELCA Support:**

<https://community.elca.org/Tanzania>

Your support makes this work possible!

See video:

“A NICU’s Journey in Tanzania – Baby Blessing”  
[www.vimeo.com/drswanson](http://www.vimeo.com/drswanson)



Baby Blessing at 3 months

**At our doorstep.**

With your help, we treat hundreds of children with severe malnutrition each year at Selian Lutheran Hospital, through an inpatient and outpatient feeding program. This past year the short rains of November/December did not arrive, which led to widespread crop failure. We saw the numbers of malnourished children increase to new levels. Hunger is at our doorstep. It is not only touching the young infant, but the toddlers, school age children and even the mothers. What is the face of the hungry? Empty eyes. Skin on bones. Apathy. Sadness. It is difficult to work if one is hungry. It is even difficult to laugh. The problems are complex, the solutions need to be creative. While we are feeding one at a time, we also seek to find community solutions that would impact families and villages, and prevent children from reaching such a level of malnutrition.

**Prayer points:**

- Wisdom and direction in the development of our feeding program to address child malnutrition at the village level.
- Protection and health for our family, safety while traveling.
- Newborns struggling for their lives in the NICU.
- Training of Tanzanian doctors and nurses.
- Hope and strength to care for the suffering children in our care.

**Kid’s Corner**

Another school year... and yet, one unlike any other for us as a family as our eldest, Hannah, begins a new adventure in education at a Rift Valley Academy (boarding school) in Kenya.



It was hard to say goodbye, but we believe she is in a good place. We know she is not alone, for even there, God’s hand will hold her fast (Ps. 139). As you can imagine, the stress of new teachers, new friends, new curriculum, new country on top of leaving home, is pretty high. Your prayers would be appreciated.

Back on the home front, Caedmon is entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade and is busy with school and swimming. He and some buddies are planning a campout on top of a local hill this very weekend! His plan? To take as little as he needs to survive. Next on Mom’s agenda? Finding a wilderness survival course to make sure that indeed, he will survive!

Finally, Indya. It was 1 year ago that she was evacuated to Kenya, then South Africa, and finally Pittsburgh, for her surgeries. We are so grateful to say, she is doing splendidly!! She had surgery in MN on her eardrum this summer, and we are happy to report that the perforation is healed and in a matter of weeks, our little fish will be back in the pool! She has jumped into Middle School and is settling into her new rhythm well. Thank you for your prayers for continued healing.