

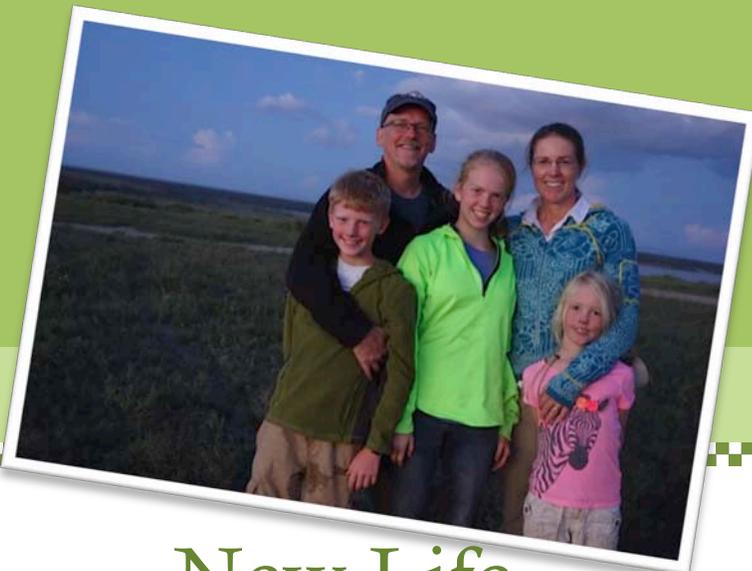
Tanzania is our home

Swanson Family Newsletter

Arusha, Tanzania

ELCA.org/globalchurch

August 2014



A little about us...

We are a family seeking to join in the work that God is doing among children, through healthcare in low resource areas.

We are trained as a pediatric nurse and community health educator (Jodi) and a pediatric infectious disease/ tropical medicine physician (Steve). Our years of training and preparation took us to many countries spread across 4 continents; we have worked in academic, university, government and Christian hospitals, from remote villages to large cities. We always called MN "home"... prior to our being transplanted to African soil.

We moved to Arusha in October 2013, after many years of thoughtful prayer and investigation.

In this journey of life, we have been blessed with 3 spirited children: Hannah (14), Caedmon (11) and Indya (8).

New Life

Flying to Tanzania last October, Steve and I looked at each other on the flight and exclaimed, "We did it!" We had packed up "our lives" and were flying to a new land to walk through a door God had opened. Almost as soon as we landed, with a laugh we were saying, "What have we done?!" In this transition to a new life, we have had tears of sadness and many laughs of joy. It took longer than we expected to "settle in" as we searched for a home, transitioned our children into a new school and reached out to build relationships.

Each day we have interesting and beautiful sights all around us. We look forward to sharing more photos of daily life and work with you in the future. Steve is working in the hospitals, training Tanzanian physicians. The kids have started a new year at the international school, and I am now involved with the Tanzanian nursing school and in the medical/nutritional care of hospitalized children with severe acute malnutrition.

We said goodbye to so many friends and family that were incredibly helpful to us as we left, and we have been warmly received here in Tanzania.

~ Jodi



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God's work. Our hands.

Selian Hospital photo credits: K. Krohn, MD



God's work. Our hands.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands! Psalms 90:17

In January 2014, I began my pediatric work at two teaching hospitals in Arusha, northern Tanzania. One hospital is based in a more urban setting (Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre) and one serves in a community of greater poverty (Selian Lutheran Hospital). After my arrival, I accepted the position of medical director for the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). My days are filled with infectious disease consultations, caring for hospitalized children, and teaching Tanzanian healthcare providers.

Excellent medical care for children in Tanzania faces daunting obstacles. Neonatal, infant, and under age-5 mortality rates are likely much higher than reported official statistics. Limited treatment options exist for seriously ill children who are hospitalized. All too often, diseases are worsened by childhood malnutrition and food insecurity. Frequent shortages exist in medications and equipment, and medical misdiagnoses are daily events. Genuine shortages of qualified doctors and nurses are apparent, and great needs in medical training are evident everywhere.

Despite these challenges, *improvements in the delivery of healthcare for children are occurring!* At Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre, we are in the process of expanding the only neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) that exists in northern Tanzania. Over the past years, we have experienced an exponential growth of sick babies being admitted to our NICU. Though I frequently see unfortunate deaths occurring in our NICU, I have also witnessed many preterm babies (weighing as little as 2.2 pounds) and critically-ill newborns successfully cared for and discharged home to grateful mothers.

Moreover, there is a hunger among young Tanzanian doctors and nurses to learn more and improve care. One Friday evening, our NICU was crowded with 10 Tanzanian medical interns who had spontaneously gathered at the bedside of a severely jaundiced neonate—asking about bilirubin encephalopathy and eager to help with a medical procedure (exchange transfusion). The baby boy survived and recovered well! Over the past few months, several young doctors have approached me to ask how they might receive further training in pediatrics. In these young doctors and nurses, I see the answer as to why we are here.

I am encouraged by what is happening around us. The care of babies and malnourished children is improving. I sense that we are at the beginning of exciting time of healthcare in Tanzania, with doctors and nurses alike acquiring the medical knowledge, skills and passion to better care for their children. Tanzania is a gentle country, and I am grateful to be on a journey with such beautiful colleagues and people.

~Steve

Thanks for partnering with us!

Prayer requests:

- ◆ health and safety (these are real issues here)
- ◆ effective training of Tanzanian nurses & physicians
- ◆ friends for our children – Hannah, Caedmon, Indya
- ◆ cultural wisdom and language acquisition

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