

Report of Tanzania Mission Trip 2018

Travel dates: Sept 29-Oct 15, 2018

Travelers: Michele Hermansen, Pastor Chris Bellefeuille, Ted Olson, Victor Thalacker, Fred Anderson, Marie Rogger, Rick Kloetzke, Paul and Brenda Kaese

Itinerary:

Sat, Sept 29 Depart MSP at 5:02 pm on Delta for morning Amsterdam connection
Sun, Sept 30 Arrive AMS at 8:15 am, Arrive DAR at 10:10 pm, overnight Dar es Salaam, TZ
Mon, Oct 1 Drive to Iringa from Dar, Meet Deacon April Traut to begin BKB orientation
Tue, Oct 2 In Iringa Diocese office: General Sec'y Naymann Chavalla, Bishop Gaville, St. Paul Partners; Iringa Hope, Neema Craft, Huruma Orphanage, bookstore
Wed, Oct 3 Drive to and arrive in Mwatasi
Thurs, Oct 4 Mwatasi
Fri, Oct 5 Boma Secondary School, back to Mwatasi for supper and evening
Sat, Oct 6 Mwatasi
Sun, Oct 7 Mwatasi through mid-afternoon, then returned to Iringa by evening
Met April Traut, Peter Harrits, Jo Whiting and Russ Hilliard for dinner debrief
Mon, Oct 8 Depart Iringa 9 a.m Charter to Arusha arrived noon
Tues, Oct 9 Begin day at Chapel & Tour ALMC Hospital, School of Nursing, Plaster House. Shop at Widow's Might. Dinner at Jacobson's
Wed, Oct 9 Begin day at Selian Chapel and Tour Selian Hospital
Hospice Visits or Arusha History Center
Thurs, Oct 10 Tour Maasae Girls School; Drive to Ngorongoro area to position for safari
Fri, Oct 11 Fred & Vic in Arusha; Group in Ngorongoro Crater
Sat, Oct 12 Fred & Vic in Arusha; Group in Tarangire National Park/Tarangire Safari Lodge
Sun, Oct 13 Group leaves Tarangire, returns to Arusha. 5:30 departure for 9 p.m. flight home
Mon, Oct 14 Arrive Amsterdam 7:35 a.m; Arrive MSP 12:43 p.m.

Attachments:

Pastor Chris' blog
Pre-trip published purpose and goals

Narrative report:

You might say we crammed three very separate experiences into this trip: our time in the Iringa Diocese and our partner congregation in Mwatasi; the medical ministries led by Dr. Mark Jacobson in Arusha, northern Tanzania; and the safari in the Ngorongoro Crater and Tarangire National Park. Any one of those things would be life-changing experiences for most people. We were certainly privileged to share all three, and we are grateful that we were together as a team to see God at work in so many different ways each day.

In order to keep this report to a manageable length, we will cover main topics of action items and allow Pastor Chris' blog to cover details. Big picture – we met all pre-published goals for the trip.

I. Mwatasi Lutheran Church Partnership and related topics

During our time in Mwatasi, Vic, Fred, Rick and Paul spent their time working on the water system with members of the water committee and the St. Paul Partners team when they were in town (Thursday and Friday). The rest of our team spent the majority of our time with Pastor Chaula and Pastor Lusungu Msigwa, our guide and interpreter from the Iringa Diocese. We visited all six of the preaching points and the three outreach stations (smaller than a preaching point), many of which are quite far away. We also made 6 very enlightening home visits. The first morning, we had the privilege of visiting with seven members of Iringa Hope, and heard the stories of those members.

A. Mwatasi Lutheran Church Partnership Meeting and Congregation Report

In attendance were Pastor Erasto Chaula and seven of the Parish Council members, chaired by Oscar Mbelena. Alafisa Mpogole is the Parish Secretary and becomes the next Chair.

Their parish has 5 priorities, as presented by them:

1. Renovating the old church into a Vocational training center
Cost 3 million Tsh to renovate. (USD equiv \$1279 at 2345tsh/\$)
They have 200 youth in the village and providing this vocational training, the youth would not stay idle (give them work to do) and they wouldn't migrate to large towns.
Machines would be: compressor, Multipurpose driller/shaper, grinder, cross-cutting machine, carpentry box-cutter, electrical connector.
Have people skilled in trades and skilled in training. Have training courses.
2. Finish renovating pastor's house. Appreciate the money received last year which allowed reroofing. Total renovation cost is 11 million Tsh. Got 6 million; need 5 million Tsh more. (Note, this final work commences April 2019 for price of 4 million Tsh which is available from our Partnership Funds. USD equiv.= \$1706)
3. Scholarship
Appreciate funds. Last year received more applications than funds. Some were orphans or one parent children, and we assigned scholarships to the most needy.
4. Three-wheeled hand pedal bicycle for Ibrahim who is disabled 21 year old member and is cared for by his mother and grandmother. The bicycle would enable him to get around on his own as his legs are paralyzed. [Team note: hand pedal bikes were seen at Neema Craft in Iringa and are imported from a company in Minnesota for the disabled]
5. Three new churches for the preaching points in Wjembe, Kilolo and Kasombe

Mwatasi church prayer requests for the Trinity congregation are for their evangelism work, their families, their economies and our mutual relationship.

They share their appreciation for:

- Taking the time to visit in person in Mwatasi
- Efforts for clean and safe water
- Continued commitment for water to Manyigi
- Taking the time for visiting members' homes
- Sharing encouragement for membership in and support of Iringa Hope SACCOS (Savings and Credit Cooperative Society) and importance of completing application for AMCOS (Agriculture & Marketing Cooperative Society). [see Iringahope1.org or facebook for information]

(update: 2/21/19 Iringa Hope reports on completion of AMCOS application, including application/proposal for IDC building. 48 members of AMCOS and 36 members of SACCOS.)

Our partners “welcome us to come again, but also welcome youth and children who will make this partnership more sustainable.”

We noted that their strengths as a church are evangelism, hospitality and children. They have remarkable skills in all three from which we can learn.

At the end of the meeting we presented our group/congregational gifts. We provided reading glasses of various strengths for the congregation and to the village nurse for distribution. All members of the partnership committee selected and benefited from the reading glasses. We also provided Swahili/English bibles for their 14 sponsored students in Secondary School plus 1 for Pastor Chaula, and 20 sets of 4 booklets for their children’s program. They were also provided with quilts and a communion chalice.

Church-related Recommendations:

- Send a similar “Partnership Report” which this year could be focused on our purpose statement and five core values, plus the action to become a Reconciling in Christ Church and what it means.
- Maintain regular correspondence with Mwatasi Lutheran Church
- Incorporate prayers for, lessons from, and remembrance of our partnership in our regular worship and lifelong learning
- Continue our annual benevolence to Mwatasi Lutheran Church, and continue the Secondary School Scholarship program (and related teacher training, etc) administered by BKB
- Prepare for and encourage family participation in future trip to Mwatasi

B. Electricity

The village of Mwatasi does not have electricity in the section that our teams stay in. However, there is wide-spread use of solar to power indoor lights at night. There IS grid power electricity in the far north end (Ibwangwe/Wangama) and in segments of Manyigi. It is projected that grid electricity will extend into all of Mwatasi by the end of 2019 or in the next 18-24 months.

C. Mwatasi Water

Our team was greatly assisted in Mwatasi and Bomalang’ombe by the Tanzanian staff of St. Paul Partners from Iringa, led by Hannah (Hanael) Gadwe, including Onno Mella and Peter Mwakatundu. The members of our team who worked on the water included Vic Thalacker, Rick Kloetzke, Paul Kaese, and Fred Anderson.

Water Overview:

There is safe water flowing daily from the Mwatasi pumphouse to two taps in the village of Mwatasi. However, people are still obtaining water from the old surface water pools at the bottom of the hill below the pump house/primary school, and likely at other unsafe water holes that we didn’t see. There is no safe water at the primary school or dispensary.

The former Ibwange Pump House (now Wangama) is functioning well. Two of the taps that were installed along the Mwatasi/Ibwange line no longer exist. The pipe connection between Mwatasi and Ibwange/Wangama at the water tower is broken. Menasi Kisava agreed to be responsible to fix the connection (although no progress has been reported as of Feb 2019).

The team met with the two water boards from Mwatasi/Manyigi and Wangama. Wangama is now a separate legal government entity which consists of what was previously known as the Ibwange portion of Mwatasi and the new expanded section of the village north beyond Ibwange. The Ibwange pump house that was erected by our team in 2005 is in Wangama and is run by the Wangama Water Board.

It was the impression of the SPP team and of our team that the Wangama Water Board was functioning well. It appeared that the Mwatasi/Manyigi water board had significant internal issues that were causing problems. One issue was that Menasi Kisava had been wearing too many hats as the Village Chairman, Water Board Treasurer and water technician and there didn't appear to be separation of powers financially or functionally. They had appointed a new treasurer about a month prior to our October arrival but the issues weren't resolved as Menasi had not transferred the money to the new treasurer. Also, there is insufficient money in the treasury (less than \$300) to make even simple repairs. Hannah addressed these issues very directly (in Swahili) with the water board. Functional or real involvement of women on the Mwatasi water board appeared to have diminished also. SPP is continuing to follow-up with the Mwatasi/Manyigi committee regarding the change of responsibility. As of February 2019 the money transfer had not occurred and it appears to be at an impasse.

Physical inspection of the Mwatasi water system showed that people had reverted to using the unsafe water hole near the well at the bottom of the pump house hill. The hand pump near there is also not functioning. There was no safe water reaching the Primary School or dispensary. The Sim storage tank at the primary school had been filled by students carrying buckets from the surface water at the bottom of the hill below. We were told by the primary school's headmaster that even when the safe water system was functioning and available at the school property, the school has issues affording to pay for safe water (at 100 Tsh price per bucket). This is a village social issue. The water board chair expressed strong personal support for safe water at the school. The nurse at the dispensary, in our short visit, expressed the need for water at the dispensary.

Upon our return home, we have learned there are potentially easy technical solutions to greatly reduce the cost of water supplied to institutional users such as the school and the dispensary. These issues illustrate the significant need for ongoing communication between Mwatasi and Trinity/SPP.

Further inspection by our team determined that all three Mwatasi pumps were good (2 in the wells in the valley and 1 in the pump house). The electric wires had been cut accidentally by farming in the area to pump 2, so only pump 1 was pushing water up to the pumphouse. This wasn't enough water flow to keep pump 3 running so it would starve out the pump and shut it down. It did, however, provide enough water to provide the two main water taps of Mwatasi with safe water.

Our team did not have access to underground electrical wire to fix the problem, so the solution was explained to Menasi and the new water board chair and left in their hands to fix, to which they agreed. The water board chairperson said farming has now been restricted in the areas of the pumps

to prevent this issue in the future. Update from Hannah as of February 2019 is that the wiring has not been completed due to the financial issues between Menasi and the water board.

An unexpected and we believe, quite fortuitous, finding is that a water system funded by the World Bank has been built and provides water to some sections of the broadly defined village (which we have not had opportunity to map or completely explore as a team). Electric power available at the source of the system powers the system. The “World Bank System”, as we refer to it, fills a concrete reservoir by the Catholic Church and gravity feeds the system of taps. The taps are well-constructed and each has an underground shut-off valve. A homeowner near one of the taps was observed turning on the tap at a pre-arranged time. The system is quite large and extends all the way to one tap on the road south of the Mwatasi main church that leads to the river at the very south end of Mwatasi.

The problem that we saw with this system is that it is pulling surface water from a stream and thus, is not safe water. The conversations that the team had within the village indicated that villagers were well aware of the difference between the safe and unsafe water. This World Bank system was either built after the UMN engineers’ Jan 2017 visit, or was not visible to the UMN engineers in their limited knowledge of and time in the village, and therefore was not considered in their proposals for the Manyigi water system which followed our original plans and thoughts.

It is highly likely that there is now an excellent opportunity for a more affordable and better functioning scenario that did not exist before to provide safe water to thousands more people, given the new variable of the World Bank system. This solution anticipates drilling wells that replace the surface water source of the World Bank system, the efficiency of the electric grid powering the WB system, and the electric grid extending to Mwatasi proper in 12-24 months. This option has been discussed since returning home and sharing our information with Chris Catlin, the principal water engineer of the original system and a member of the SPP Board.

Water-related Recommendations

1. This team recommends contracting with SPP as soon as possible to install a new hand pump for the village to replace the one that is no longer functioning below the Mwatasi pump house. Obtain pre-purchase and installation cost estimate from SPP TZ. Team’s approximation is <\$2000. This recommendation is in line with the stated desires of the Mwatasi water board.
2. This travel team realized that 14 years after the installation of the Mwatasi water system there remain significant internal village management and empowerment issues to be overcome before the water system itself and the water board operate effectively. The team’s second recommendation is that an appropriate role for Trinity now is to find a way to accompany our Mwatasi partners in their Community Development with longer term trained presence supported by St. Paul Partners’ staff and expertise.

After return home and discussing informal reports on the status of the water system and potential ways to accompany the village in community development, a donor has come forward anonymously with \$25,000 payable through St. Paul Partners for the purpose of hiring a qualified mentor/Community Developer in Tanzania who can walk alongside the

Mwatasi Water Board and village to provide support for a period of time. This support is anticipated to include:

- Resolution of financial management issues within the Mwatasi/Manyigi water board; leadership training for board
- Potential change in operational management of water system (identifying and training new technicians and ensuring backup)
- Follow-up and mentoring as necessary on completion of necessary system repairs
- Encouragement for open participation of female board members (Mwatasi/Manyigi)
- Monitoring of ongoing board operation for sound operating practices (Mwatasi/Manyigi)
- Serving as English speaking liaison between water board and Trinity partners

A qualified candidate (U.S. expatriate) has been identified in the Iringa area to fill this role.

This recommendation incorporates the resources of St. Paul Partners to facilitate and manage the financial payments and also works in cooperation with their staff in Tanzania. The relationship with the village is Trinity's and thus, for clarity and consistency, communication with Tanzania regarding this project will be centralized with an appointed Trinity individual.

3. The team recommends convening a working committee to study and recommend alternatives for a Manyigi water system and the existing Mwatasi system. The committee would be charged with recommending how to complete the necessary research in Mwatasi/Manyigi and developing detailed action items. The committee's recommendations would be presented to the Tanzania Action Team and Mission Board.

D. Bomalang'ombe Secondary School

We spent the major portion of a day at the Boma Secondary School with two primary purposes: first, to replace the water pump in the drilled well which has not functioned for over a year (we were told over two years) and second, to meet Headmaster Shedrack Kikoti and tour the unfinished buildings at the school as well as taking inventory of the construction storage container left by Trinity.

We were welcomed enthusiastically by the student body and then enjoyed a presentation of marching, singing, dancing and acrobatics. They currently have almost 200 students at the school (capacity 350), 12 teachers and 8 staff members. Of the total scholarships, 56 are provided through BKB and 35 by Germans.

Our water team with the SPP team and hired electrician and plumber set out to replace the pump in the well. The pump, one of two donated by Chris Catlin with a computerized programmer, was brought over by our team. The well was about 320 feet deep so it was a challenging but successful installation. One of our team members taught the SPP group how to program the pump for the desired output and the water started flowing clean at the top of the school hill. The school was shown how to clean their storage tank and make the final pipe connections while the well pumped and cleared the water. The second pump and programmer were left with the SPP team, confident that they could meet the next need for a new pump.

As of March 2019, the Tanzania Task Force received SPP's invoice of \$1306 for the outside labor on this repair and the well development prior to our arrival in 2018. St. Paul Partners paid \$2000 of the costs associated with these repairs. Mission funds were previously earmarked for this purpose.

While the water pump work was occurring, the rest of our team met with the headmaster and toured the school grounds. The school's challenges as presented by the headmaster include:

1. Need increased enrollment to provide more tuition income for the school [team note – Enrollment was noticeably down and no longer strains capacity resources, as observed in past. This is most likely impacted by the increased numbers of government Secondary Schools. It was reported to us outside of this meeting that there is a new school nearby in Bomalang'ombe that competes with this private school. Team has unanswered questions about school's long-term sustainability.]
2. Need to have all teachers live within the campus to be included in evening activities and studies. 7 live here now.
3. Plan for buildings and laboratories are key to be able to teach forms 5 & 6. Government is forcing every school to have them.
4. Toilets are not in good condition and not healthy.

We inventoried the well-stocked construction trailer that was left there by previous Trinity construction teams and toured the unfinished buildings started under previous Trinity leadership.

In the team's tour of the school, we were very pleased to see the new high-efficiency and high-capacity cook stoves in use in the kitchen of the multi-purpose hall. The headmaster said the two stoves were made in Kenya.

School-Related Recommendation

- Before Trinity provides further direct support for the Bomalang'ombe Secondary School, this team recommends research by a small Trinity task force regarding the school's viability/sustainability, and development of recommendations for Trinity related to future support. The group would work with BKB to understand the school's planned future within DIRA. The study would include confirmation of the location of and facts about the nearest government secondary school to better understand its impact on the school.

II. Medical Ministries Led by Mark Jacobson in Arusha

We bid farewell to Pastor Msigwa and our driver Kulwa who had accompanied us to Mwatasi, and Deacon April Traut and Peter Harrits who had joined us briefly in Iringa, and flew to Arusha from a dirt airstrip in a small charter aircraft to meet Dr. Mark and Linda Jacobson and visit the medical ministries developed under Mark's leadership.

Our first day Mark gave us an overview of the ministries along with the historical and cultural contexts. They serve 4 million people in northern Tanzania, historically Maasai. Due to Tanzanian legal requirements, Selian Hospital, the first and oldest medical ministry, is now a separate legal entity from ALMC (Arusha Lutheran Medical Center). ALMC ministries include the hospital itself, outpatient clinic, a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Plaster House, the School of Nursing and a Surgical Residency program. A major issue in Tanzania is an extreme shortage of healthcare workers. Meeting this need is part of the focus on sustainability at ALMC. The School of Nursing has over 100 students enrolled, and the surgical residency program has 10 residents and graduates 2 new surgeons

per year. It was noted that of 2 pediatric surgeons in Tanzania for 50 million people, one of them is at ALMC! We toured the ALMC hospital itself which includes an outpatient clinic and the NICU, the School of Nursing and Plaster House, both of which are in separate sites.

Selian Hospital serves the rural villages and suburban population without health insurance, and “the marginalized and forgotten.” Our tour of Selian Hospital began with morning chapel. They have 160 beds and serve 2000 outpatients per month. Selian was a small dispensary when Mark arrived in Tanzania and became a hospital in the early 1990’s. The Hospice Program is also part of Selian, and we learned about their outreach both onsite at the hospital where they have a pediatric clinic and 2 drop-in clubs per month for children and teens with HIV/AIDS, and through home visits in which we accompanied hospice staff. The hospice program has faced extreme financial and staffing challenges since USAID funding ended in 2016. The Denver Hospice is now its primary source of philanthropic support.

On behalf of the congregation, our group presented a special \$2000 gift for ALMC from Trinity’s Outreach Mission funds, deposited into ALMC’s account at Global Health Ministries, for which the Jacobsons were very grateful. The group also provided some 3M medical supplies for the hospital, blood pressure cuffs and stethoscopes for the nursing school, and quilts for Plaster House.

We spent an interesting morning at the MaaSAE Girls School, not officially part of the Medical Ministries but related in several ways, on our way out of Arusha as we were departing for our safari. The school was started in 1995 by the Rev. David Simonson and the local Tanzanian Bishop to educate Maasai girls from the time they finished primary school through the end of Secondary School. It is a boarding school for 350 girls with the purpose of educating the girls for economic independence. Operation Bootstrap Africa (OBA) has served as its philanthropic support in the US (Mpls) and it has long-term ties with Concordia College. The school has become a strong source of students for the ALMC School of Nursing.

Recommendations related to Jacobson Medical Ministries

- We recommend that we include the work of the Arusha ministries in our regular church prayers, and in the internal informational programs and the Outreach Missions of our congregation. There are many ways these ministries can help our members to more readily understand and visualize the ways that God is at work through global medical missions.
- We recommend that Trinity continues its annual benevolence funding through the ELCA for the Jacobsons’ continued service in the world.

III. Safari to Ngorongoro Crater and Tarangire National Park

Please refer to Pastor Chris’ blog for narrative related to this portion of the trip.

Recommendation related to safari portion of trip

We recommend that a safari at the end of the trip is an important part of the experience. It is a quieter time to contemplate God’s creation and to continue learning about the culture, the ecosystems, stewardship, and the country of Tanzania. The safari guides are very experienced and knowledgeable and can be very informative. It is also a decompression time to begin processing the experience of the trip in preparation for re-entry into the frenzy of our culture and life.

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Attachment 1: Trip Purpose Summary

October 2018

Trinity Stillwater Trip to Tanzania

Trip Itinerary

Visit ministries in Arushas started and led by Mark Jacobson (in northern Tanzania) and visit our partner congregation of Mwatasi in the Iringa Diocese (in southern Tanzania).

Overall Trip Purpose

Continue to learn about and support sustainable ministries based on the accompaniment model of ministry. Bring the stories of Tanzania alive for the people of Trinity and the St. Croix Valley

Objectives

- 1) Reconnect with the people of Mwatasi congregation, reassuring them of our connection
- 2) Experience as much as possible a day in the life in the village for people in Mwatasi Lutheran Church – Live Accompaniment!
- 3) Assess status of 2005 water system including operations
- 4) Discuss village priorities for Manyigi water expansion – timeframe for completion, their investment, level of assistance requested from us, confirm well drilling recommendations
 - a) Request St. Paul Partners to begin monthly interaction with Mwatasi and Manyigi water board(s) on our behalf in March
 - i) Consistent meetings, attendance, minutes
 - ii) Makeup of water board – female involvement
 - iii) Financial stability
 - iv) Village electricity status
 - v) Succession planning for Menaas
- 5) Learn about the experience of members of Iringa Hope in Mwatasi – the local micro-finance SACCOS which is dedicated to raising the rural standard of living through small loans.
- 6) Dedicate the repaired and operational well at Bomalang’ombe Secondary School in partnership with St. Paul Partners
- 7) Review priorities and potential future partnership opportunities at Bomalang’ombe Secondary School.
- 8) Visit medical ministries in Arusha led by Mark Jacobson.
 - a) Learnings – sustainability, accompaniment, multi-cultural, missionaries, poverty vs middle class, largest hospice in Africa, cancer, hope, healing, growth, teaching, best practices

Attachment 2: Pastor Chris' Blog

The Moon Tipped Over

Monday, Oct 1, 2018

We drove through Mikumi National Park on our way from Dar es Salaam to Iringa. Zebra, giraffe, water buffalo, elephant, gazelle, kudu, puma, and baboons! Stopping for a late lunch then 5 hours more to Iringa. (Already 5 hours.)

Tuesday, Oct. 2, 2018

It takes a long time to get from there to here. Eight hour flight from MSP to Amsterdam. Eight hours from Amsterdam to Kilimanjaro. (At which point, the plane disgorges three quarters of its passengers, all of whom seem set on summiting the great lady of the Serengeti.) Then an hour hop from Kilimanjaro to Dar es Salaam — a city which name evokes exotic fragrances and great beauty. Which is kind of true. But the name, which means Haven of Peace, doesn't capture the teeming crowds, frantic traffic and late night market stalls — all blanketed by haze from the cooking fires. A scent oddly reminiscent of Irish peat.

We stopped for the night in a tidy little motel, where apparently none of us slept well. No surprise given we went to bed at the equivalent of 4 p.m. on our body clocks.

We woke to roosters and the smell of breakfast. Then reloaded our 20 passenger van/bus driven by Kulwa and were off to Iringa Town; a drive expected to take 5, 6 or 8 hours depending on whom one asked. Try 11 1/2 hours. It was an epicly long day, punctuated by naps and wild life sightings: giraffes, zebras, gibbons, elephants, gazelle, kudu, buffalo and puma!

It's a long way from there to here. But as we left the airport in Dar we looked up and saw the moon. A half moon. Waning. From the top down. Like the moon tipped over. We're here. Not there. Except in spirit.

Mungu aku bariki
Pastor Chris and Team Tanzania

Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2018

Greetings from Iringa Town.

Last night we had supper at the Lutheran Center in Iringa. There we met Deacon April Traut, the Bega Kwa Bega coordinator here. Then, finally, to bed; where most of us slept brilliantly, although some had vivid malaria medication dreams. First, a couple of notes from the drive yesterday.

We were very sleepy due to jet lag so dozed frequently en route. At one point our leader, Michele, shouted excitedly: "It's the basket village!" By that time in the drive we'd all learned to wake up and sit up quickly so we didn't miss the latest cool thing to see. The basket village is a very small village that still has tree trunks with branches right next to the road. Nearly all of them were hung with baskets of all shapes and sizes, in a variety of colors. It was like driving down the lane of an expansive country estate, only instead of oaks, it was lined with basket trees. It was beautiful and worth waking up for.

Nearly the entire route, except for within Mikumi National Park, was lined with villages. And within even the poorest of the villages are multitudes of very small businesses. Wee huts with hand painted signs, most selling a narrow variety of goods or services. Haircuts, fish, children's clothing, water and soda, cell phones, hardware, motorcycle parts. Many had large groups of men sitting out front, idling the day away with conversation or something that looked like checkers. (One of the great questions here is the apparent idleness of the men, while the women are quite industrious. It's a question openly shared by male Tanzanian leaders we met with.) There seemed an impossible number of these small business and we saw very little actual commerce.

And then there are the fruit and vegetable venders. Huge buckets piled with onions, tomatoes, and less familiar edibles. When the bus would slow or stop, the venders would be in their feet, rushing the bus with their wares. Kulwa, our driver, stopped to buy what had to be 8 to 10 gallons of tomatoes and onions for about \$3 US. He must have had a half-dozen vendors urging him to choose their fine product. By the way, the tomatoes here come in the most remarkable color of red. And they are delicious.

Today was a day spent in awe of what it means to be church in Tanzania. We first met with General Secretary Chavalla of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. And with Frank, who coordinates the scholarship program. And with Pastor Msigwa, who also works for BKB. These three spoke at length, with passion and intelligence, about what it means to be church here and about the partnership agreement with the St. Paul Area Synod. (Prayer, Visitation, and Projects.)

There is too much to be shared in this space about the difference between church here and there. But one example. The church here is instrumental in getting kids educated, especially beyond primary school. The government finally offers free primary school but not past 5th or 6th grade. So, the churches run schools and help pay so the kids can attend them. Otherwise many kids would not be able to get even a high school education. This is not something we have to mind as church in the US.

We were also able to meet with Bishop Gaville, who reinforced the importance and power of being present in Tanzania. He is clearly a busy man. His grace and hospitality were abundant, even when his schedule demanded that our time had come to a close.

We went from the Iringa Diocese compound to the headquarters of Iringa Hope Tanzania on the campus of the University of Iringa. Our gifted teacher is the finance

director and helped us understand the workings of microfinance, savings cooperatives and agricultural cooperatives in supporting the livelihoods and industry of village farmers. She helped educate us so that we might in turn encourage our partners in Mwatasi to pursue forming an agricultural cooperative to their own advantage.

From there we went to Neema Crafts, a project of the Anglican diocese in Iringa. They employ the physically disabled who would likely otherwise be homeless or begging. These talented folks become the co-creators God made them to be, making, sewing, silk screening, weaving, carving, and building beautiful items for the home or personal and practical use. (www.neemacrafts.com) They also run a rather lovely, and delicious, cafe staffed entirely by their clients.

From there we went to the Haruma Centre, which is an orphanage and another project of the Lutheran church. It was everything you'd hope: hugs and singing, dancing and laughter. Ted becoming a human jungle gym.

I met a 13-year-old girl when we bonded over a name. She is the oldest of three children; all of whom are at the center, all of whom have only a thumb and two fused fingers on each hand. Their feet were similar, looking like a fork with two tines.

Is this why a family of three children is all at an orphanage? Was it more than the parents could manage – although all three kids ran and played and sang like the rest? Maybe it had nothing to do with the kids at all. And what is their future? The language barrier was great; although she and I did compare our hands and feet. (The age difference as striking as the numbers of digits.) Her friend tried to speak for her, but she had no English either. And I no Swahili. The hugs were genuine. The children appeared to be beautifully cared for, happy, engaging, respected and respectful. And then we had to get in our Coaster bus and drive away. Fred said it may take years for us to process everything we will see and experience here. That might explain the numb, overwhelmed feeling I had upon leaving Haruma.

The evening ended with dinner at the best (only?) Italian restaurant in Iringa, called “Mama Iringa”. There were were joined by April Traut, Jo Whiting and Russ Hilliard (BKB Ambassadors) and Peter Harrits from the Saint Paul Area Synod. We ate and laughed and learned still more.

And now it's time for bed for all, malaria medication dreams for some. I'll go to sleep thinking about Christina, the oldest of three. Wondering what else we might have in common.

And we still haven't been able to catch a picture of that tipped over moon.

Mungu aku bariki,
Pastor Chris and Team Tanzania

PHOTOS: Meeting with ELCT staff: scholarship coordinator Frank Mkocho, General Secretary Naymann Chavalla and Pastor Lusungu Msigwa. Meeting with Itiwani

Samson, Finance Director at Iringa Hope. Pastor Chris finishing her blog while other team members catch up on world news. Touring and learning about the jobs at Newman Craft.

Thursday, Oct. 4, 2018

Feelings, impressions, questions are a snarl of used bits of yarn in my chest and I can't yet tease them apart to examine them one by one. Asking questions gets stalled and it feels like opportunities lost.

Yesterday we finally made it to Mwatasi where our welcome was warm and loving and unlike anything we do for ordinary visitors. Not that traveling from the US to Tanzania is ordinary. But WE are. No presidents, potentates or royals among us.

The food is abundant. Simple and the same. But cooked with love and hospitality. And frankly delicious.

We are staying in the Mwatasi guest house where we all have beds and rooms. And our very own squatty potty just down the hall. Think indoor outhouse, without anywhere to sit.

This morning the St. Paul Partners folks from Iringa joined us for breakfast. After breakfast, Fred, Vic, Paul and Rick went with them to examine the existing water system for problems. They were able to fix some and identify others. After lunch they met with the water boards from Mwatasi and Manyigi to sort out a plan.

Water is, to say the least, challenging.

The rest of us spent the morning interviewing 6 people participating in the Iringa Hope Saccos (Savings and Credit Cooperative Society) here in Mwatasi. It was inspiring to learn how people use very small loans to change their lives: buying seed, fertilizer, land, trees and equipment to enhance or start businesses. Many used the money to pay school fees, send their kids to secondary school and build or improve their homes. Nearly all of them had a next plan for increasing their financial capacity.

The contrast to payday lending (also small loans) is shocking. One woman said she chose the Iringa Hope Saccos because she trusts the church to have her best interests in mind.

Then we visited the homes of 6 women: five of whom are widows. Pastor Choulla from Mwatasi and our translator, Pastor Masigwa from BKB, joined us. Like at home, some are more prosperous than others. But all were so profoundly different than the comfort in which we live. No plumbing. No water source. Window glass is rare. Only one home we visited had access to electricity.

Although many ingeniously used small solar panels to charge phones and solar powered lamps to provide light for cooking and homework.

To a one, the women were kind, shy and overwhelmed at our presence. They answered our questions quietly and even asked one or two of their own.

The perspective of many is profoundly agrarian; we have been asked more than once what crop we grow. (One boy asked me about the most common kind of cattle in America. And he and his friends laughed uproariously at the idea of growing corn for livestock. Explaining ethanol challenged our language limits!)

A woman asked how old women take care of themselves in the US. How do you explain social security and retirement accounts to people only just being introduced to savings and sometimes can't find the nickle they need to buy clean water. She understood better when I told her about an 87 year old who is still working in order to survive.

Later in the afternoon we visited five preaching points that are part of the Mwatasi parish. In each site we received a classic Tanzanian outpouring of love. Unfortunately, we seem to always be running late so the larger welcomes they had planned had to go back to their work!

This feels insufficient to the task of inviting you all along on the trip. Know that you are loved here and prayed for. We miss you. We are challenged, deeply. We are in awe of God's presence and lively activity here. And the bible comes alive everyday! It seems to me the moon in Eden would have been tipped over.

Bwana asifiwe.
Pastor Chris and the Trinity Tanzania Team

Friday, Oct. 5, 2018

Bomalang'ombe Secondary School!
What a day! A good day. A joy-filled day. And thanks be to God, a wet day!

We are adjusting to the time zone. Everyone is sleeping better. And the team is enjoying each other tremendously.

For breakfast today we had maandazi (plural for andazi), which is a leavened fried bread about the size of two donut holes. It's not sweet but beautifully textured and crispy brown on the outside. Rather spectacular with peanut butter.

Then we loaded up the Coaster bus for the drive to Boma. As we left Mwatasi, we stopped first with gifts for the Mwatasi primary school. The children had prepared a lovely wee welcome. The older ones were happy to show off their English. "We are fine! We are sitting!"

Then we stopped at the clinic, or dispensary, with reading glasses, medical gloves and soap. The clinician (who we think is a cross between an RN and a PA) had just started yesterday! She looked impossibly young as she talked about how desperately they need electricity. It's so close now. So hopefully soon.

Then off to Boma. More terrible roads and a very, very...oh, what the heck...VERY sketchy bridge. When we arrived, the students (nearly 200) were all out, blocking the road. They have a new group that seems to be a cross between Scouts, ROTC and an honor guard. They marched the bus in with the rest of the students singing alongside. When Kulwa opened the van door, we were literally swept off the bus by a mass of singing, dancing students. We were mobbed!

They laughed and smiled and passed us from hand to hand. A couple of us were handed bouquets of flowers. Then we walked through the scout formation and into the main gathering hall. There they sang and sang and sang. From time to time we got pulled into the fray. We met the teachers and staff. Then saw a rather remarkable tumbling display that culminated with the boys cooking an egg on another boy's flaming hat. (We promise pictures when we're back in wifi range.)

It was overwhelming to hear these students sing praise to Jesus in full-voiced and beautiful harmonies. Our hearts were full.

When the speeches and performances were complete, we were ushered out by the scouts and joined the headmaster for a second breakfast, a tour and a long conversation about the school. We will bring a full report when we get home but their biggest challenges are competition with the increasing number of free government secondary schools, need for real science labs so they can add Forms 5 and 6, toilets for everyone but especially permanent toilets for the boys, and teacher housing on campus.

Meanwhile, back at the pump house, the water team installed the new pump with the help of a local plumber and electrician and the St. Paul Partners team. There was much rejoicing when after two years without safe water, the pump worked and the water began to run clear. We clipped the lock on the container and found our full inventory of tools till there. We found some needed things for the water projects and some things we donated to the school, like light bulbs!

We ended with yet another feast, toasts, thanksgiving and prayers for water.

It was a good day, a joy-filled day and, thanks be to God, a wet day!

The Coaster bus got clipped by a truck on the way back. Luckily we were going very slowly. The foot and motorcycle traffic on the roads leaves me in wonder that it hadn't happened already.

Now we are back at the guesthouse, blogging, calling home and checking out the water situation with fresh eyes. Supper still to come, although no one can imagine being hungry again.

We have been here two and a half days. It's still overwhelming most minutes of the day. But the people offer love and friendship freely, the hospitality never stops. Neither does their laughter.

As for me, as Sunday approaches I ponder and pray what to preach. It's not that I'm nervous as much as I truly feel inadequate to the task of bringing a good word to so many who embody the good word.

Don't get me wrong, there is plenty of darkness in this beautiful land. But the body of Christ is light and salt and wet! It brings new meaning to what it is to be Lutheran.

Tonight we are determined to find the Southern Cross in the night sky and maybe finally catch a picture of that tipped over moon.

God is good. All the time.
All the time. God is good.
And the Tanzanians add:
That's the nature of God!

Pastor Chris and your wet Tanzania Team
Oct. 7, 2018

Today is Saturday. Tomorrow, worship is a special day for children. They are beginning to gather from all around the parish, which is comprised of a main station in the village of Mwatasi and 7 or 8 preaching points served by evangelists. The pastor tries to visit each preaching point within every two month period. The total "parish" is well over 1000 people... that's Lutherans, not all citizens.

The children are arriving with their Sunday School teachers, not their parents. They began arriving last night. Some arrived on the bus that comes through the village at about 4 am. The rest will arrive today on foot. Many will walk many miles to get here.

We are told we will hear from them this evening and they will sing in worship tomorrow.

S
o, I got up at 7 am. By then we had long heard the voices of children, chattering, playing and gathered in the church singing.
It's going to be a great day!

After more maandazi for breakfast (serious yum) the water team went back to the Mwatasi pump house to engineer. Seriously. It's what they do. Even the epidemiologist. They engineer and they do it well.

The rest of us went with Pastor Choulla to visit the final three preaching points, one of which is brand new and worshipping in a temporary structure. We got to meet evangelists, elders and always children. A half dozen folks from the first site rode with us to the next two sites, singing and drumming all the way. It was one of those “can this really be my life?” moments.

We are all captivated by the way the whole community honors children in church. Pastor Choulla (who is clearly the “Big Potato”, as they say) interrupted his own comments at the new site in order to send someone out to welcome in the children gathering outside. When they came in, they sat down immediately and paid close attention to everything. At one site, about a dozen children (who hadn’t gone to Mwatasi with their Sunday School teachers) gathered on a set of tiny benches that served as pews. Two of the children had even tinier children strapped to their backs, little mothers in training.

They clapped along with the women’s dancing and listened attentively to all the greetings and introductions. It is quite a sight to see.

Earlier, as we were waiting to load the bus back at Mwatasi, the children began to gather around us. Everytime we turned around there were more of them. They naturally organized themselves with the tiny ones in front and tall ones in back.

They kept a respectful distance and patiently waited to see what would happen next. (Frankly, it feels a little like being a zoo animal!) When prompted to sing, they did so readily and as one voice. They love to laugh and enjoyed when we taught them “Ho-ho-ho-hosanna!” Then Kulwa started the bus and they scattered like bunnies in every direction.

After lunch Marie and Brenda did an art project with the kids which was quite popular. We’ll bring back their product and post pictures soon. This afternoon we had a partnership meeting: our team, Pastor Choulla, Pastor Msigwa (translator and guide) and 8 leaders from the parish. They presented a report of their 5 top priorities. Again, we will bring the full report when we return home. Their priorities range from exciting ministry ideas to purchasing a hand pedaled tricycle for a young adult member who is unable to walk. Because we are partners not supervisors, we promised to send them a similar report after our annual meeting in November. They excel at things like hospitality, evangelism and children’s ministry (of course, we have Julie!) and there are so many things to be learned from them.

Then the conversation became a little more free ranging and we discussed HIV/AIDS in both countries, marriage, bride prices, death rates and causes and more. We could have gone on much longer but everyone was also getting tired. So we presented our gifts to the pastor and the parish, which was very moving. Pastor Choulla and I could be great friends and colleagues were it not for the language barrier. So my first job is to do my bit to break that down. (Babel app!)

A great moment was discovering that most of the partnership team needed reading glasses, which we brought in abundance. (Note: bring more!) They tried the various strengths back and forth and picked what they liked. It was awesome to watch their expressions as they read one of the bibles with their new glasses.

There are more glasses for them to distribute as needed. In addition, we left a good supply at the village dispensary.

Then, after pictures, we walked over to the church to enjoy some of the presentations by the children. (Remember, all the parish children are here for the weekend.) Singing, skits and bible verse presentations. Everyone paid close attention to each other. It was wonderful, both different from and so familiar to watching our own children. They clearly enjoyed presenting their hard work. And we will hear more in worship tomorrow.

Here the singing is call-response. A woman leads and the people sing a refrain. While at the program, a little girl led them. Her voice was both tiny and powerful as she led 200 children in praising God.

And the day still wasn't over. After dinner, the women went to visit Alefsa, a very recent widow (only 48 years old) with 6 children. She leads the partnership committee, serves on the village water board and is a member of Saccos. With the profits from her tree farm she built a very good house, the nicest we've seen. With her we discussed how easy it is, when alone with our thoughts, to assume we are the only one with our problems or worries. She was surprised and comforted to learn that we women had similar experiences and worries, even in America. She found healing in learning that Marie was also a younger widow.

It was very moving and overwhelming.

So now to bed. We have one night left here. Worship tomorrow. By the time you all read this, there will be more stories to tell. And someone may have bought a chicken.

Before bed we looked for the Southern Cross in the night sky. And for the tipped over moon. We hope to see it again before we leave.

Bwana asafiwe.

Pastor Chris and your Tanzania Team

Sunday, Oct. 7, 2018

This blog has been an attempt to invite you along on our experiences in Tanzania. What it has not been able to do is express our/my responses to and reflections on those experiences. That will come in time. Because it will take time.

This morning, after breakfast and before worship, the water guys met again with the village water board. They had been frustrated with their own progress in Mwatasi.

After the water board meeting they felt much more optimistic about the ongoing progress for safe water in Mwatasi. From the perspective of the non-water team members, they look like winners. A replaced pump at Bomalang'ombe secondary school, which means clean, safe water right on campus. And a fixed pump in Mwatasi, which means clean water in the village. We think they are amazing.

Worship was not exactly as I expected. Not the same high energy call response singing and dancing we had experience upon arrival and on our visits to the preaching points. But it was rich and holy in its own way, both familiar and foreign. There were three choirs: women, youth (complete with electronic background music and heavy bass) and the bibis and babus (grandmas and grandpas). Their singing has a haunting, longing quality that is hard to explain. It stirs something deep in one's chest.

Maybe it connects with that ember of God's image within us that the Celts say can be clouded over by sin but burns nevertheless because what God created in us cannot be put out.

The offering was stunning and worth considering. People walked their offering forward. Everyone. If they didn't have cash they offered potatoes, both sweet and "Irish", beans, greens, hand woven baskets, and even a single egg. They often take more than one offering. Today they set up two boxes, one for the regular offering and one for Holy Communion Sunday.

I preached and Pastor Msigwa translated. And together we served communion, he in Hehe*, I in English. Pastor Chaula (I finally learned the spelling) was gracious and hospitable. (*Hehe, pronounced hay-hay, is the local tribal language.)

We exchanged some small gifts and words of thanks, then the kids performed the rest of the music they had prepared. We had to leave for our lunch before it was over because we had a long drive back to Iringa Town. After we ate and packed the bus, we went back to the church for the auction of non-cash offerings. The Tanzanians seemed happy to let us out bid each other, especially on the baskets.

Then it was time to say good bye. Warm hugs, hand shakes and love from so many. I got to say goodbye to my young friend Nema. He was so dashing, dressed for church in a royal blue three piece suit. His dad was kind and filled with love. A broad, strong man, he made you feel HUGGED!

The drive back over those teeth jarring roads was rather quiet. As eager as we all were to shower and use a bathroom with a seat, the village and her people get under your skin in a deeply holy way. Brenda said it so beautifully when we were introducing ourselves at church: "I came to Tanzania to see how people are different. Instead I discovered how we are the same."

There is so much more to say.

We dropped Pastor Msigwa at his home on the edge of Iringa Town and met his wife and darling 10 year old daughter. It was difficult to say good bye. He was our ears and our voice for so many days. A patient, funny, kind guide and advisor. Now a treasured colleague and friend. Asante sana, Pastor Fusungu Msigwa!

We arrived back at our original hotel, showered, shampooed, and met up with our friends from BKB for another great meal at Mama Iringa's. They debriefed us, asking a few questions as our stories came bubbling out. It was lovely to chat with people who understand. Because you can say more with less.

And, again, there is much more to say. I expect I have a treasure trove of sermon stories for a long time to come. Because, as I think I said several entries ago, the Bible comes alive here. And the people reshape your soul.

We crawled into clean sheets with clean hair, I suspect most of us missing the smell of cooking fires and the sound of the small saloon down the hill. Even missing our tiny rooms with comfortable beds and warm blankets at the Mwatasi Lutheran guest house. The sounds of each other settling in to sleep until the rooster crow.

We'll be awakened by alarms tomorrow and it's off to Arusha.

We spoke of you often this afternoon as we kept track of your worship and reflected on our own.

The tipped over moon is still hidden and we forgot to have April show us the Southern Cross!

We love you all.

Pastor Chris and your Tanzania Team

Photos: Our motorcycle escort into Mwatasi which grew from two to six! Our last breakfast in Mwatasi. Gathering for worship on Sunday.

Pastor Chris preaching with Pastor Msigwa interpreting. Pastor Chaula listening to the sermon. A child peering through the Communion trail gate at worship.

Pastor Chris and Nema. Michele Hermansen and Pastor Chris with Nema and his father and brother.

Oct. 8, 2018

Is it really October 8th already?

We woke to breakfast in our simple but now sumptuous feeling Iringa hotel. We were met by Deacon April Traut and Pastor Peter Harrits, both from BKB. Then we boarded the bus to the Nduli airport outside Iringa. We retraced part of our route to get there. There we said goodbye to our driver Kulwa. He's a talented driver, navigating horrifying roads, challenging traffic and fearless piki piki (motorcycle) drivers. We are so grateful for him.

We boarded a very small charter, the only plane in sight, a 12-seater for the flight to Arusha. (Super clean plywood squatties on the corner of a field.) Those tiny planes aren't as well pressurized as jets so we all found ourselves taking lots of deep breaths. We did get mango juice and cookies, though.

After an uneventful flight we were greeted at the Arusha airport by Alex and Dowdy, our drivers for the remainder of the trip. We loaded two very military looking, jeep-y vehicles and headed for our next hotel.

Here's a funny thing. They x-rayed our luggage as we left the airport. Not when we got on the plane. And we got to take water bottles on the plane. Hmmm.

We got to our hotel, which is very nice. Ted was thrilled to see a lap-worthy pool.

Then we had lunch, which took so long we wondered if they'd gone home. Timing and traffic moved today's plans to Thursday so instead we went to the Maasai market for our first chance to bring home treats for our families. I learned a lot about bargaining.

Then back to our hotel for some overdue quiet and downtime. Ted got into that pool and swam and swam and swam. We read, washed our undies and reflected on the jarring change of lodging from 48 hours ago. Plus, a couple of us have cold symptoms. Smog and cooking fire haze? Weariness? 200 kids packed into a small church? Who knows. Thankfully, Rick has a 3M international travel pack with good cold meds.

We met for a late dinner and then off to bed. Today turned out to be just what we needed. Time to think.

Tomorrow we head for Arusha Lutheran Medical Center and Trinity's own Dr. Mark Jacobson.

No sign of the tipped over moon tonight.

Bwana asifiwe.

PC and your tired Tanzania Team

Oct 10, 2018

How is it Wednesday? How is it the 10th already? And where is that moon? These are the questions we ask as we rise giving thanks for another day.

Another early morning as this time we set out for Selian Hospital and their 7:30 a.m. chapel. This is where Dr. Jacobson started when he came to Tanzania over three decades ago. It was a dispensary then and just celebrated 25 years as a full hospital. (Fun fact: Dr. Nathan Gossai — Trinity member and son of our teammate Marie Rogger — worked at Selian for a few months between college and medical school.)

Our tour guide was the Head Nurse Felix. He's been there nearly twenty years and is very well versed in both the history and the operations. Again, it's like and not like our hospitals at home. This time it was even more clear that the Tanzanians are deeply concerned about their patients and aware of the realities of their home lives. (What one hospice nurse calls "Africa life.") It could be because Selian serves the middle to low income folks.

We toured a pediatric unit that does a fair bit of malnutrition refeeding and a maternity ward that struggles with women brought in after traditional indigenous

birth methods have failed. And patients' families have a kitchen where they can cook for their hospitalized loved ones and laundry facilities if they end up staying a long time.

After the tour we were greeted by hospice director and RN Elisabeth, hospice RN Paulina and the hospice chaplain. They sat with us to explain how this particular hospice and palliative care team works. (They are connected to both Selian and ALMC.) They are passionate about their work and, like the other related medical ministries, in need of funds.

The men had returned to the lodge by this time for lunch and a sojourn to two history museums. It worked out well because our two hospice visits took us to very small homes.

Over 90% of their patients have HIV/AIDS and many of them are receiving palliative care rather than hospice. Others have cancer. There is no cancer screening here so most patients aren't diagnosed until they are stage 4 and/or terminal. (Cervical cancer is a significant cause of death for women in Tanzania, which we found shocking. It's a very survivable cancer found in the US on routine pap smear screening.)

Our first visit was to a 55 year old man with HIV/AIDS who just spent 6 months in a tuberculosis treatment center. The nurses made him meet us outside and made him sit down wind. While thoughtful, not particularly comforting. He was very kind and seemed not to mind us being there.

He was deemed to be doing okay and supplemented with a multivitamin. Then we visited the home of a 30 year old mother of 5. She and her husband are both diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. The children came out to greet us and by Maasai tradition present their heads for a caress. They were sweet, gentle kids.

We were invited into their home where the nurses met only with the young mother. "Her man" was away. One of the nurses made a comment to us on the way in about how tightly spaced her children were and how they had spoken to her about the impact on her health. Then they found out she's pregnant with number six. The nurses were very direct about birth control and the woman said her husband doesn't want her to use it. Fortunately, there are proven and successful ways to prevent the baby from contracting the virus so she will need to be carefully monitored.

They escorted us to our cars and posed for pictures. Then the husband came home and was given something for a "little trouble in his chest." Saying goodbye to Elisabeth and Paulina was very hard. We completely fell in love with their compassionate and forthright natures. They would be amazing friends.

After an hour or so of downtime, the Jacobsons came over to our lodge for happy hour and to enjoy the unexpected drum/dance/acrobatic show poolside. It all feels a little surreal after Mwatasi home visits and Arusha hospice visits. We are humbly grateful to have this privilege. And it's awkward.

Our drivers arrived at 7 to take us to a place Michele remembered from a past trip: Khan's Barbeque. Situated down a side street by the central market, Khan's shop repairs fuel injectors for diesel engines by day and serves mutton, beef, chicken, naan, salads, chips and hot pickles by night. The street is called Mosque Street because there are three mosques within about two blocks. (The Tanzanian population is about 40% Muslim, 40% Christian and the balance traditional religions.) The restaurant is completely outside, braziers in the street with tables under the awning across the way. As we sat down to eat, the call to prayer sounded over our heads. It was a moment of pure intercultural bliss. While we still couldn't see the moon, you could almost feel it tip over.

La la salama,

Pastor Chris and your Tanzania Team

Photos: Pictures of the children's ward at Selian. Michele in the Land Cruiser in the way to Khan's and Khan's Barbeque.

Oct. 11, 2018

It's a long way from there to here and from anywhere here to anywhere else here. We didn't have to get up so early today. So we gathered at 9 a.m. already breakfasted and packed for safari. Vic and Fred are skipping the safari to stay in Arusha to do more water work. But they did join us for a trip to the Maasae Girls Lutheran Secondary School in Monduli. What a spectacular visit. We had tea and "queen cakes" (small cupcakes that taste like angel food) with the headmaster as he told us about the school and some incredible stories.

This school serves primarily girls from marginalized communities in the area. Most, but not all, are Maasai. Because primary school is mandatory (and essentially free) in Tanzania, all kids go. But many of the tribes will turn their daughters over to be married as soon as they complete primary school – at 12 or 13 years old. The school works with primary school teachers to identify high potential girls who are then literally picked up with the clothes on their backs the day they complete their primary leaving exams. Without permission from their parents. I know. It hits all kinds of alarm buttons. Please read on and we can share more when we get home.

They are brought to the school and begin pre Form 1 English to get them ready for the English immersion of secondary school. Most (99%) are thrilled to find themselves at the school rather than being married off to men often in their 50s or 60s. (We drove by the boma – or village – of one man said to have somewhere between 37 and 60 wives.)

It's too much for the blog but the stories will stun you. Here's just one.

After Form 4, the students take exams. If they score well, they stay for Forms 5 and 6. Students with lower scores are connected with vocational training. They are not sent home.

It takes a while for scores to come back. One girl went home to wait and one evening noticed an increasing number of people gathering near their home. When she asked her mom about it

the girl was told that she was to be married and handed over to her husband the next day. She was 15.

She calmly helped her mom prepare food for their guests then after dinner asked if she might take a bath in preparation for her wedding day. She wrapped a cloth around herself, took a towel and water, slipped on her sandals and walked into the bush, ostensibly to bathe. She had hidden her cell phone in the folds of her cloth wrap.

Once away from her house, she set down the water and ran. She used the road as a guide but stayed hidden. She spoke frequently to the headmaster by phone and walked until 7 a.m. when one of the little buses came by. She got on and handed her phone to the driver who spoke to the headmaster. The driver was so taken with the story that he drove the girl all the way to the school free of charge. She is now in university. Unmarried and on her way to financial independence. Which is their ultimate goal.

Financially independent girls are able to return home as teachers, nurses or community development workers without threat to life or well being.

After the presentation by the headmaster, our group was handed over to a cluster of Form 5 girls for a tour. What a gas! All animated, curious, funny and friendly. We learned what lunch menu items delighted them and which were just okay. We toured their dorms, kitchen and library. They are clearly proud of their school and their studies. My student was 16 year old Bahati, which means lucky. She loves math and geography and plans to be a land surveyor after university.

What an amazing mission to educate the whole girl, set remarkable minds free and bless the world.

Too soon their lunch was ready so we said goodbye and had our box lunches near the two-year-old administration building. Vic and Fred headed back to Arusha before lunch.

The upper respiratory bug that bothered Ted and has plagued Rick and me turned its attention on Vic. Since they don't have commitments until tomorrow he was looking forward to a full afternoon of R and R.

Next up for the other 7 was the two hour drive to Bougainvillea Safari Lodge. We passed through a lot of Maasai country. Bahati had said when you grow up Maasai you eat meat, meat and more meat, as they are a cattle (and goat) herding people. We passed a Maasai market doing a vigorous trade in livestock.

We also passed several small bomas and one enormous one. Bomas are a sort of small village or compound. Built of mostly dome-shaped lodgings (although more standard shapes are not uncommon), they are built in a circle with the head of the boma on the right as you enter the compound and the wives' homes on the perimeter. In the center are the ritual or ceremonial grounds and safe harbor for the cattle overnight.

We passed through a lively village that we may visit again tomorrow to finish “acquiring stuff” for our families.

We finally arrived at our lovely lodge, where the rooms are freestanding buildings. We rested, wrote and blogged until dinner. At our ABUNDANT meal we learned that Alex, our driver and guide, is an elected city council member in Arusha and his wife a crop broker. They have three kids: Allen – 26, Gladness – 23, and Lisa – 13. He’s smart and very experienced so the next couple of days should be great.

Well, our mission days have come to an end. It’s safari now until we meet back up in Arusha to head home. Our days were long, full, and transformative. We learned more than we ever thought possible.

Philippians 1:6 says: “... the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”

We have a long way to go, but God’s faithfulness to God’s completing work has been evident.

We’re tired. We have some culture shock and some affluence guilt. Our hearts have been broken open and we are full up. I, for one, am ready for home.

I expect people will ask: Will you go again? It’s just too soon to answer that question.

But I have a solid list of what to include in packing and what I’d like to do next time. So, there is that.

We have only 3 nights left to see that crazy moon. I’m beginning to think I imagined it.

La la salama.

PC and your Tanzania Team

Oct. 13, 2018

Today has been a most different day.

After breakfast, we grabbed our boxed lunches and loaded the Land Cruiser for our first day of safari. (Vic and Fred did something with engineering and water today but we’ll have you get the details later. Cell coverage and internet access an exercise in frustration.)

One can only attempt to list the animals we saw: elephants, giraffes, elands, wildebeest, gazelles, zebra, black rhino with a baby, hippos, hartebeest, water bok, multitudes of birds (like the Kori Bustard) and water birds, the most gorgeous grasshoppers ever, jackals, hyenas, lions, the rarely spotted caracal cat, vervet monkeys, baboons and, probably my favorite, ostrich. The list is by no means complete. And the setting! The floor of the collapsed crater of the Ngorongoro volcano. The crater ring surrounded us and it was stunning.

We had to eat each lunch in the car because the kites aggressively steal food. It was a bit Hitchcockian as yellow birds started gathering on the roof.

We arrived at our lodging for the next two nights, within Tarangire National Park. Most of us are in tents with plumbing and limited electricity. And the animals, all of them, are known to enter the resort. So, that's cool.

When Ted and I told the front desk that our tent won't zip completely, they said: "Oh! That's important. We'll fix it right away!"
Again, cool.

We learned that it's difficult to see the Southern Cross constellation from this part of Africa, unless you're up really late or really early. But we finally saw that pesky tipped over moon. It rises and arcs low in the sky. It's just past 8:30 p.m. here and it's already too low behind the lodge to see.

But we got a picture.
Today we give thanks for God's expansive imagination and, well, sense of humor. Seriously, the giraffe and the hippo came from the same place!

La la salama,
Pastor Chris and your Tanzania Team

Supplementary

Jambo!

We woke earlier than necessary. Ted because it was one of those nights when he doesn't sleep much. Me because these lovely lodgings are, in fact, TENTS and we can hear every word, unless you speak quite softly. So at 6:20 a.m. I heard from the next tent: "So, when you're in the shower, do you wash your beard and mustache?"
And still I am grateful because while we awoke after sunrise, it's heavy cloud cover today. So instead we woke in time to see the sun as in the first photo below.

I give thanks that God still imagines, still creates and still delights. As we await breakfast opening on this too early morning we will take in the awakening savannah, the little dik diks and an array of birds and evocative birdsong that crack our hearts open even a little more.

Sorry, moon. This one belongs to the sun.
Bwana asifiwe.
PC

Oct. 15, 2018

We got through the night in our tents without any significant wild fauna encounters. My previous post gives you an idea of the morning that greeted us, with the sun splitting the clouds.

Breakfast was amazing. Rhubarb “sauce”, as my grandma called it. Not as in sauce to put on something but as in sauce-y goodness you eat with a spoon. Truth be told, though, I kind of miss the more traditional Tanzanian breakfast of chapati, beans, and roasted sweet potatoes.

Today’s safari, or game drive, took place right out our front door, which happens to be right in Tarangire National Park. Within the first five minutes we saw ostrich, mongoose (mongeese?), and impala.

Alex, our driver and guide, and Rick, Michele’s cousin, are great game spotters. Well, everyone does their part. Perhaps the highlights of today were the lioness in the tree, the elephant within an arm’s length of the vehicle and a beautiful giraffe in the shade of a tree who let us get impossibly (yet respectfully) close. (Although, a few went on an evening game drive that included lion cubs!)

We saw, again, the remarkable variety of creation. The savannah is out of this world beautiful, even in the dry season.

After watching a gardenia tree full of very cute and compelling baboon families with tiny, tiny babies, we headed off to enjoy our box lunches. We arrived at a classic national park picnic area: ample parking, clean modern restrooms and picnic tables with big umbrellas overlooking the savannah. People were relaxed and dining peacefully. Brenda and I chose a table under the shade of a tree and sat down. Marie was close behind. Rick will take the story from here:

“We just stopped for lunch and Brenda, Marie and Pastor Chris picked a spot off to the side and sat down for lunch. Michele and I were about 30 yards away when I heard yelling and I see Pastor Chris fighting a monkey that was trying to steal her box lunch. She actually hurt her arm hitting the monkey before they (2) stole away with her sandwich and banana.

The good news is everyone is ok, and she’ll have quite a story to tell the parish when we get back....”

First let me say, no monkeys are hurt in this episode. I was trying to bat them away. They are not not soft. Hard heads and muscular arms.

Needless to say, we abandoned the bucolic setting and ate in or near the truck.

We also adjusted our perceptions about the very cute, compelling monkeys. After lunch we walked over to the bathrooms and saw a couple and their guide enjoying a very peaceful and undisrupted meal. AT OUR TABLE!

Who knows where those monkeys got to. Pesky little blighters. They’re like simian velociraptors: organized and crafty. Hope they enjoyed the sandwich.

After lunch we headed back to the lodge. It’s so beautiful here you could drive all day but we’re tired. It’s been an intense two weeks, as those who have been here know. We needed time with a book and a beverage. Besides, from the shade in front on our tent, we can spot ostrich, elephants, zebras, impalas, dik diks and more.

As the time to come home draws near, tears and laughter (opposite sides of a thin coin) bubble near the surface. As my kids would say: “All the feels.”

Tanzania means earthy, incarnate beauty, radical hospitality, ready smiles and endless kindness. Tanzania means the moon, tipped over. Which is really cool. But our hearts, broken open as they are, are now turned toward home. Home means home. And that means everything.

With love,
Pastor Chris and your Tanzania Team

Oct. 15, 2018

The last day.

Nature showed us some fresh stories again today. Fresh kill and lazy, full lions before breakfast. Appetites undaunted, we worked our way through our last breakfast of pancakes (crepes, really) with rhubarb sauce, eggs, baked beans, tomatoes, fresh fruit, hot coffee and more. We again packed box lunches – mine encased in iron – and headed out for a short game drive before the trip back to Arusha.

This morning we saw an ostrich family! Babies! We watched a watering hole for a long time: zebras, warthogs and love birds. An excellent vulture sighting and more giraffes. And then it was time to go. Sigh.

On the drive to Arusha, Alex promised the last bit of souvenir acquisition. We stopped first at a place that said it helped women. Frankly, I was skeptical. That seems to now be a marketing ploy because those places that DO help women draw a lot of support. The sales tactics were far too aggressive. Even when I finally, in despair, asked one person to back up and give me some ROOM to look, she persisted. So out I walked.

Next stop, a more expensive but very laid back store. Some prices very good, some very high. Life-sized Maasai warrior, anyone? The last few treasures procured, we scanned the area for attack monkeys and sat under a big cabana for lunch.

Fed, again, we headed back to Ilboru Lodge, where Vic and Fred were waiting. There we picked up our stored luggage and used two “day rooms” they had set aside for us to shower and repack for the trip home.

After a swim, Ted and I met with a young couple that Linda Jacobson had connected Ted with. Elliot works for The Nature Conservancy and Jana for a non-profit that works with girls secondary schools. It was interesting to learn how they do what they do in Tanzania. And we each got to hold their splendid 5-month-old baby.

A meal was included with the day room so we trooped upstairs for an early dinner. The Jacobsons stopped by with some bags for us to deliver home. They begin the process of kind of retiring and kind of moving home this Christmas. It's been announced but the story is theirs to tell. We're just happy their new state side home is Falcon Heights and the St. Paul Area Synod. At least for a few months a year.

Our drivers showed up with the nicest vehicles we've seen in two weeks. With working air conditioning! What!? And we were off to the Kilimanjaro International Airport for our flights home. The highlight of that trip was a pretty decent look at Mount Kilimanjaro, the empress of Tanzania. As Ted said: "What a monster!" And he continued his internal planning to come back for a walking safari and an attempt at the mountain. Will any of the team return to join him? Stay tuned.

And there it is. It was a nearly perfect trip. Michele's planning and leadership were first rate. And it's safe to say that her primary agenda of getting the first timers hooked on Tanzania has been accomplished. Well played, Michele. Well played.

We pray for continued safety as we make our way home through Dar es Salaam, Amsterdam and then MSP.

I cannot speak for the team, but I'm a little weepy. And really excited to get home. I wonder if there is a Swahili word for bittersweet.

The tipped over moon showed up bright and sure to wish us traveling mercies as we crossed the tarmac to our plane. And perhaps to entice us back.

With love,
Pastor Chris and your Tanzania Team

P.S. This entire blog was written on a cell phone with a single index finger. So thank you for your kind attention in spite of those limitations.

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