



Celebrating 7 years in Tanzania!

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*October 2020 update from:*

Dr. Stephen & Jodi Swanson

ELCA Global Personnel

### **There and back again (not a hobbit's tale)**

Though we are not hobbits, we do have a tale of traveling there and back again!

In mid-July, we traveled back to the United States for a number of reasons, including Hannah's college start, reconnecting with our parents, family and friends, and acquiring needed medical supplies. Within 48 hours of arrival, Steve became ill with what was ultimately confirmed to be COVID19. (He suspects his exposure occurred on the 30-hour trip from Tanzania). Within a week of Steve falling ill, Jodi, Hannah and Caedmon also became sick with confirmed COVID. Only Indya was spared.

It was not exactly our plan for re-entry, and the next 4+ weeks were spent largely in quarantine and recovering from this illness. The kids bounced back within a week, but Steve and I took the better part of 6 weeks to recover. Thankfully, none of us were hospitalized.

Because of COVID, our subsequent return back to Tanzania was delayed. We are grateful that we had the opportunity to settle Hannah into her freshman year at St Olaf College, visit missed friends, and spend long overdue time with our parents/siblings. Now that our time in MN is coming to a close, we enter a preparation time of collecting supplies for the hospital, packing, and fitting in all our last minute appointments. In the midst of it all, we have had time to appreciate the changes in the season! We recently celebrated Hannah and Steve's birthday with a weekend getaway to the Mississippi River Valley where the colors of the trees are changing. We are grateful for the beauty of autumn, and the time with family.

As we turn our eyes back toward Tanzania, we recognize that this month marks 7 years since we moved from MN to Tanzania (Oct 2013). We seek to reflect on the gifts we have received from living and working in so vastly a different land than our original home... what has been learned, accomplished, forgiven, renewed. Gifts received and given through friendship and service, and the opportunity to use our hearts and minds to serve through healthcare and raise our children with different experiences has been cherished. We have learned so much and are grateful for the people with whom we have journeyed, and our organization (ELCA) for supporting us in this work.

Autumn marks the end of one season, the heralding of another. We ask for your prayers as we ponder, discuss, and plan a way forward. We want to use our time and resources in this next chapter to serve Tanzanian children and their families, train doctors and nurses, and love a beautiful nation that faces such healthcare and economic uncertainty.

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## Every Breath Counts

Manual of Neonatal Care & Drug Doses



First Edition

### **Our latest project...**

a 300+ page Neonatology handbook for Tanzanian hospitals, doctors and nurses. It will be published and distributed next month.

Prematurity remains the leading cause of death worldwide among children under 5 years of age. Most deaths are preventable.

This book was the culmination of several years of work in developing practical, evidence-based guidelines on the care of critically ill newborns. It was co-written with 2 amazing NICU nurse volunteers (Lisa Giesbrecht, RN & Lauren Stenzel, RN) and a fantastic pediatric colleague (Dr. Kendra Martinez), and is part of our education/training mission.

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**Kid's Corner**



### **On her way!**

Hannah is well on her way to transitioning into college life at St. Olaf in MN during this pandemic. It has been a challenging time including various stages of quarantine. The college has been very strict in their guidelines and have had no outbreaks nor rises in COVID cases for which we are grateful. She has found all the running trails, has 2 classes on-line and 2 classes in a socially distanced, masked, in-person setting! To say the least, this was NOT the usual start to a college experience. She has been flexible and positive, and we are grateful that we have been able to see her a few times, even for her birthday! Though her gap year was cut short due to the pandemic, Hannah had a very positive experience in wildlife conservation and it confirmed for her the desire to pursue Environmental Studies. She is making friends and enjoying the fall leaves!



Some summer fun found us in the trees and on the water with a fall trip to Red Wing, MN, where we found some great leather boots (above)!

Caedmon graduated from M5 (Grade 10) last June which was a major milestone in the IB education system. He finished with high marks, and top recommendations from all teachers especially for his hard work. He seems to thrive on challenges, and decided to create his own website as part of his personal project, learning a few computer languages in the process. Computer Science is now a passion of his and

it's not the only one! Rock climbing and slack lining equipment are now hauled with him wherever he goes.

Caedmon and Indya were both accepted to Rift Valley Academy in Kenya in the spring and instead of moving them to their new school this August, they were moved online due to Kenya's COVID policy. This wasn't exactly the plan!! However, this allowed us to stay longer in the states and spend extra time with our parents as well as taking care of medical needs. January starts the second trimester and we will be moving them to Kenya. Both kids are doing well online though they certainly miss time with their peers!

Indya has taken over my parent's "screen porch" and is sleeping, studying, and hanging out in her own little house on the lake. Thunder shakes the bed, waves brush the shore, and she has the opportunity to listen to the cry of the loons just near her bed. That is, if she isn't listening to music! She loves her music, finds opportunity for art, has movie time with Dad, and has started up knitting! I think she misses her dog in Tanzania!

Many of you regularly ask about Indya's health. Overall, she is doing great and the lengthened time here for the summer and fall means we were able to work on getting answers and solutions to her ongoing ear and eye problems, lingering effects of the major surgery she had in 2016. It was 4 years ago at this time that we were headed to Pittsburgh for her surgery. It is good to remember and remind ourselves of how God watched over us during that time and continues to be with us whether we are walking through a valley of darkness or blissfully paddle boarding across smooth waters.

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**Frank.**

Baby Frank is turning 2 years old (top photo).

He was born 12 weeks premature, barely weighing 2 lbs (950 grams).  
When he reached arrived into our our NICU, he had stopped feeding.

He had lost 20% of his birth weight.

His mother died shortly afterwards.

The family wanted him named after the doctor who sent him to us, "Frank".

We didn't know if he would live.

Lots of prayers and round-the-clock NICU care at his bedside,  
for 112 days.

In our NICU (bottom L) he fought for every gram of weight his body put on. He  
reached 2 kg (4.5 lbs, bottom R).

Adopted by his grandmother (top), who stayed with him every day in the NICU.

Frank is turning 2 years.

Our little fighter.

He reminds us of why we fight for the little ones.

[www.tanzanianchildren.com](http://www.tanzanianchildren.com)



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As we return to Tanzania, there are many concerns on our hearts and we appreciate those who have reached out to us to let us know you are with us. We would appreciate your prayers for these challenges:

- Work permit for Jodi, Tanzanian resident permits for both Jodi and Steve
- Hannah on her own, negotiating college during COVID times
- Caedmon and Indya's online learning and transition to new school in Kenya
- New vision and renewal in our hearts for the work God has given us to do
- Funds needed to sustain and advance pediatric work and training
- \$25,000 to buy new incubators for the NICU, used 24/7
- Complete healing for Indya's ear and eyes

We are grateful again, for the sustaining grace of God, for the love of the body of Christ. Thank you for partnering with us!

Jodi and Steve



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.



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donate to our support through the ELCA:

[elca.org/missionarygiving](http://elca.org/missionarygiving)

find our names under the drop down tab, Designation: ELCA Missionary Sponsorship

Information regarding tax-deductible contributions for pediatric work can be found at:

[www.tanzanianchildren.org](http://www.tanzanianchildren.org)

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.

Donations inside and outside USA can also be received through: [www.tanzanianchildren.com](http://www.tanzanianchildren.com)

**Your support makes this work possible!**

GHM will send you a tax deductible receipt.

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