



## Surrounding Storms



***February 2021 Update***

Dr. Stephen & Jodi Swanson

ELCA Global Personnel

Dear David,

We send greetings once again from Tanzania, as we stand in surrounding storms! For those who have suffered through this pandemic with illness, economic uncertainty, and loss of loved ones, we pray for grace and peace in the midst of sorrow and uncertainty.

It seems there is no place untouched by the pandemic. The reach of this virus is

wide. Tanzania has decided to take a different road than other nations and no numbers have been released since the end of last April. Likewise, the Minister of Health is advising local Tanzanians to use local herbs, steam inhalation, and a tonic from Madagascar. The president has said that God delivered Tanzania from COVID, and has warned people not to trust the vaccine. Tanzania has opted out of plans to vaccinate against COVID. You can find this information and more if you search the news, both from within Tanzania and internationally.

As a family, we are still taking precautions and not gathering socially except in small numbers and always outside. In the hospital, masks are still worn, but in the general public, there is seldom a mask to be found. We follow studies, suggesting that our antibodies from our past infection (July 2020) may still offer us some degree of protection, but we also live with uncertainty and the knowledge of a new South African variant that appears to be spreading on this continent.

With all the unknown, we are doing our best to continue caring for the children and families that are before us daily. There is a call upon all of us in these days of uncertainty and political change to offer kindness at every turn. To love each person, to work to understand the "other" who is not like us.

Romans 12 calls us to respond to each other in this way: "...show kindness gladly, don't pretend to love others, really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good...Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying." It's a challenge for all of us- to live this out at home, in the community, and at work.

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### **Sabina**

I met this mother shortly after she gave birth at our hospital. Her little girl was born at 28 weeks gestation (12 weeks premature), weighing only 1.06 kg (2 lbs - 5 oz). She quietly told me that she had lost all 5 previous pregnancies due to preterm labor. This was her first living baby from 6 pregnancies. Her husband had taken her to 3 different cities and 5 different hospitals, in the hopes that at least one hospital could give them a child.

This has been our experience as we teach neonatology and accept referrals from other hospitals. Most preterm deliveries, especially when less than 1.5 kg (3.3 pounds), very rarely survive.

We are changing that story, and our overall NICU survival rates exceeds 93%.

Today, Sabina's daughter is 60 days old and nearing hospital discharge (once her breastfeeding stamina improves). Her picture below was taken last week in our Kangaroo Mother Care Unit (KMC). Sabina's father told me, "I only wish I had known about your NICU before. My family would have been complete."

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3 mothers - Agnes, Sabina, Pendo

3 babies, all born between 27 - 31 weeks gestation

3 birth weights, ranging from 0.612 kg (1.3 lbs) to 1.28 kg (2.8 lbs)

3 different stories saying, "Every baby deserves to go home with their mother".

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**In 2020, our NICU continued to grow:**

326 babies

45% premature

93% survival rate\*

15+ Tanzanian hospitals referred babies to us

~25% of all babies received free care

100% of all babies receive subsidized care

No ventilators

Using appropriate technology

22 beds

Critically-ill babies can survive with proper training, equipment, motivation and support.

**Your financial support makes the difference.**

**Please donate** at: [www.tanzanianchildren.org](http://www.tanzanianchildren.org) or [www.tanzanianchildren.com](http://www.tanzanianchildren.com)

\*babies with severe congenital anomalies and extreme prematurity (<26 weeks) removed from analysis

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### **Kids' Corner**

Some BIG news? We are now semi-empty nesters! A strange new world for us.

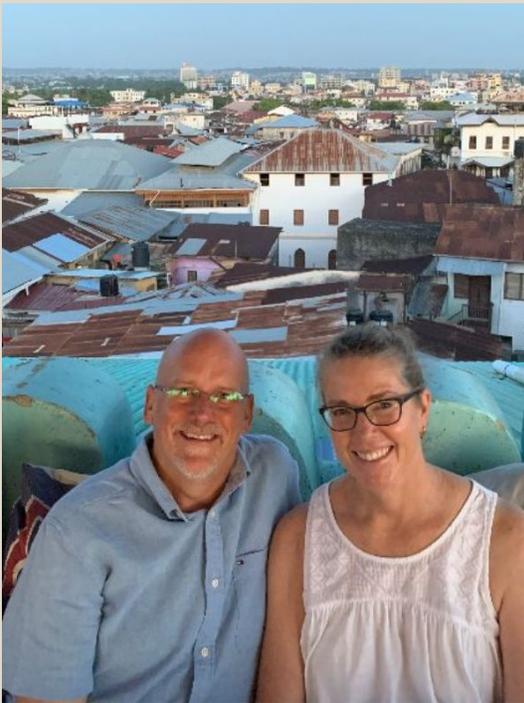
Hannah is back in her college dorm at St. Olaf and starts classes next week. We were glad she was able to be with us for Christmas and an extra month as her college went online for January term. This meant Steve had his running partner back in town, and me, my cooking partner! We miss her but are glad she is able to continue her schooling in the midst of this changing world.

Caedmon and Indya have started in-person classes at Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. The school is taking careful precautions against the virus so it changes the way school is done, but they have adjusted well. We are so grateful that it has been a smooth transition, and they are far too busy having fun to call us very often! We certainly miss them in the home, but we are happy that they are happy. Outside of the academics, Indya spends hours socializing with all the new kids while Caedmon is exploring the nearby forest with new friends. There are so many challenges with travel and schooling in this time of C-19, so we won't be seeing them until the end of March when they have a one month leave from school. Keep them in your prayers.



We found some time before Christmas to have some fun in Zanzibar and here are a few glimpses. An evening meal from a roof top was filled with the spices of the island. Getting lost in an antique store was another adventure!





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Once again, we are grateful for your interest and support, and present a few requests for you to keep in your prayers:

- Thankful for Steve's resident permit, finally in hand!
- Process of acquiring work and resident permit for Jodi
- Patience and kindness to be our response to ongoing challenges of working in a culture different from ours, including different approaches to the pandemic.
- Health and well-being for all 3 children in their schools/college (we finally got to the root of some of Indya's eye issues as she was diagnosed while we were in the states with dry eye due to the loss of her sensory nerve to her R eye during her facial palsy 4 1/2 years ago. We are thankful to know what we are dealing with and ask that you keep this specific prayer in mind as you think of us.)
- God's wisdom and strength to the doctors and nurses working here in ALMC and Selian and other health facilities in Tanzania in these challenging times.

May God, who gives us his peace, be with you,

Jodi and Steve Swanson



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.



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We are supported through the gifts of churches with the ELCA. Churches and individuals can 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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