



Because all people should have access to a healthy life.

Photo taken in Tanzania, 2020.

"Thank you for praying for me"

("Nashukuru kwa kuniombea")

Global Health Ministries

Newsletter

Disaster, and Hope



Like nothing else in recent decades, COVID-19 has brought public health into the spotlight globally. Masses of people are suddenly aware of, even obsessed with, the reality that the health of any one person is tied to the health of everyone. This awareness may be a good thing.

As we begin a new year, some are overcome with a sense of disaster, while others are inspired with hope. What drives us in one direction or the other? Perhaps it is mostly determined by what we see as possible on the horizon: do we think we (and our loved ones) can get what we need – not just PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) or a COVID vaccine, but food, water and fundamentals to make life possible?

As a Christian in this moment, I'm struck by how the goal of improving access to public health so closely aligns with what the scriptures describe as God's vision for hope

~ continued page 2

*Every valley shall be exalted
And every mountain and hill
brought low;
The crooked places shall be
made straight
And the rough places smooth;
The glory of the Lord
shall be revealed,
And all flesh
shall see it together*

~ Isaiah 40: 4-5



*In God's dream for humanity
there is equity.*

*~ Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock
Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta*

~ continued from page 1



Teaching handwashing to traditional birth attendants, Ankaramalaza, Madagascar



Enthusiastic Community Health Education (CHE) women, first training day! Lake Tanganyika Diocese, Tanzania



New digital x-ray capacity, Iambi Hospital, Tanzania

globally. Look with me for a moment at a passage from Isaiah.

Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together (Isaiah 40:4-5)

These verses are so familiar, and so poetic, that we may completely miss the obvious. I listened to Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock¹ preach on this passage for Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday, and his interpretation resonated loudly with our work together.

God's vision is to level the mountains and valleys. This isn't about topography. This vision is about equity, a vision that benefits EVERYONE, rich and poor alike. For the masses who struggle to survive in the roughest of places, God's vision is to smooth the terrain by creating possibilities. And, as if it's not already clear, this vision of hope isn't for just one group, it is for *all* flesh. God's vision is profoundly inclusive.

How might ten thousand readers of this newsletter participate in God's vision around the globe today? God's vision includes giving EVERYONE access to a healthy life. Together you and I are making rough places smoother every time we build the possibility of health by supporting community health workers, and empower this vision by launching it in new places (see "Hope Springs in Lake Tanganyika," p. 3). We build possibilities with every shipment, like sending digital x-ray equipment to two hospitals that never had this before (see "Celebrating Shipping," p.3). And we build possibilities with our focus on ensuring that in every country, even the poorest and most vulnerable have access to health and healthcare. At GHM we're obsessed with this vision, that ALL flesh will see it together. As we work together on goals of equity in access to a healthy life, I believe we are working on God's vision for our world.

Rev. Doug Cox, Executive Director

¹ <https://www.ebenzeratl.org/watch-us-live/>

WELCOME!

GHM welcomes five new Board members in 2021! **Glen Holt** and **Allen Klingsporn** both come to GHM's Board through their deep engagement with Cameroon Healthcare Development Program (CHDP), a long-time GHM partner. When CHDP ceased operations in 2019, Glen and Allen assumed the role of Partner Advocates for our work in Cameroon. Prior to retirement Glen served as an OB/GYN physician in Duluth; Allen brings experience on the supply chain side of things as Informatics Director for Essentia Supply Chain. Returning Board member **Lon Kightlinger** was a Lutheran missionary to Madagascar in the 1980s and '90s, serving in medical and public health positions. In 1998, Lon returned home to South Dakota where he served as State Epidemiologist until he retired and returned to Madagascar as a Peace Corps health volunteer. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Lon is currently back in South Dakota. **Elijah Madukuli**, who is from Tanzania, is completing his degree in social work at Northern Arizona University, where he also hopes to pursue a Master's in Public Health. **Peter Getts**, co-owner and business manager of Virginia Home Care Partners in Fredericksburg, Virginia, brings a heart for mission to everything he does, whether advocating for services for seniors or through his work in South Sudan with GHM.

Hope Springs in Lake Tanganyika!

Tanzanians will tell you that rural western Tanzania is the least developed region within this low-resource country. Lake Tanganyika, the second deepest and largest freshwater lake on Earth anchors the African Great Lakes region (which is larger than North America's Great Lakes!) and marks the country's western border between TZ and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Lake Tanganyika Diocese (LTD) is a new diocese for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) and does not have its own healthcare facilities.

A cycle of health disaster is too easy to start. Combine drought with a chronic lack of resources and lack of investment by government in infrastructure (roads, water, education, healthcare, etc.), and conditions can deteriorate very quickly for the 1.8 million people living in the 75,000 square km Rukwa and Katavi regions.

Upon LTD's invitation, a GHAP team conducted a feasibility study to help the LTD team determine how to improve health in the region over the next decade. From that study, 3 top goals were identified: reduce maternal mortality, infant mortality and stunting rates by 50% in 5 years. LTD and GHM established a 3-5 year partnership to design, establish and implement a Community Health Educator (CHE) Program as primary approach to help LTD realize their goals.

Despite the pandemic preventing a GHAP team from collaborating onsite, the LTD team launched its first full week of training for 66 volunteer CHes (3 from each of 22 parishes) and other leaders in January. Please keep the LTD Team in your prayers as they begin their health promotion journey. This CHE Program Partnership represents hope to mobilize out of disaster.

Rob Thames, FACHE, FHFMA, Dir. of GHAP



A government television station came to cover the news, interviewing Mrs. Lyatu after health education training in rural Sumbawanga village. The government is pleased with the new program in Lake Tanganyika Diocese - a program that is bringing hope to this under-resourced region of Tanzania.



Unloading for the Pathology Lab, DCMC

“The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.”
~ William James

Thanks to you, GHM is in a strong financial position, despite almost 12 months of struggles from COVID-19. Your financial gifts and prayers are creating a legacy of hope through the ministry of GHM. Thank you! Because of your partnership, we are poised to help our partners meet the challenges of this next extraordinary year.

CELEBRATING SHIPPING!

In February, 2019, GHM sent a 40' container to Tanzania. The container arrived on schedule, but complications and new Customs policies resulted in a 3-month delay in port before the container was released. GHM placed a HOLD on future shipments to Tanzania pending further study.

Hopeful we could find a way to continue sending medical supplies and equipment to Tanzania, Dr. Mark Jacobson and I hit the road, visiting a mission organization in Illinois that had had recent success getting a container through Tanzanian Customs. They had worked with Norbert and Friends Mission, a local clearing agent and mission organization in Tanzania. After many emails, Zoom calls, and much prayer, we decided to try shipping to Tanzania again as a test. It was a success! Thanks to the hard work of Norbert and Friends Mission, the container that arrived this January was in port only 6 days before clearing Customs.

Multiple partners benefitted, including Orkesumet and Iambi Hospitals, who celebrate receipt of the digital x-ray film scanners they've been praying for. And Dr. Leonard Mlemwa, Anatomical Pathologist at Dodo-ma Christan Medical Centre (DCMC), sent thanks for the equipment they received for a new Pathology Lab at DCMC. Turn-around time for lab results will go from 3-4 weeks to 4-5 days, benefitting patients and bringing revenue to the hospital. Praise God for new partnerships and the opportunity to resume shipping to Tanzania! Another container leaves GHM for Tanzania in February.

Scott Lien, Dir. of Operations

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GEMS ROCK!

Give monthly, and you'll become a part of the GHM GEMs (Give Every Month!), a passionate community invested in creating a world where everyone has access to a healthy life. Your generous monthly donation will be the bedrock to sustain faith-based Lutheran health systems in 14 countries. You can set up monthly donations on our website (ghm.org), or give us a call at 763-586-9590.

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Hope for Healing



“Disaster” is not too strong a word for what befalls a woman who suffers a fistula injury, most often caused by prolonged labor during childbirth. The resulting incontinence and shame are devastating, but surgery offers hope for healing. The Lutheran healthcare system in Madagascar, SALFA,

performed 700 fistula repair surgeries in 2020, despite a national lockdown from March until August. COVID also meant that women couldn't travel to receive prenatal care during the lockdown, raising concerns that even more could need the surgery in 2021. In South Sudan, COVID is deepening poverty that also prevents women from seeking prenatal care. Fistula repair camps, sponsored by GHM with funds from Fistula Foundation, have been on hold in South Sudan, but a camp is now planned for March.