



A Season of Change

JULY NEWSLETTER

FROM

Dr. Stephen and Jodi Swanson,
Tanzania

July 2025

Dr. Stephen & Jodi Swanson
ELCA Global Personnel
Arusha, Tanzania



*For everything there is a season,
a time for every activity under heaven.
Ecclesiastes 3*

Dear First English Lutheran church,

We are entering a Season of Change. After much prayer and discernment, we have resigned from our role as missionaries in the ELCA. Our last day with the ELCA will be October 31, 2025. We know this may come to many of you as a surprise. While this is a significant change, we hope that this does not mean that our relationship with you will come to an end.

And so before we explain, we want to say thank you. For walking with us these past 12 years. We have seen the work of God, in the midst of challenges and setbacks. The Lord has been with us, and so have you.

We have witnessed countless babies and children survive and go home with their parents, living with profound joy instead of sorrow because of this ministry that you have supported. Some of the many highlights of the past twelve years include: Transforming the NICU at Arusha Medical Lutheran Center (ALMC) into a leading NICU in East Africa.

Mentoring nurses and 20 doctors, who now work in pediatrics and neonatology throughout Tanzania and Africa.

Launching and hosting the annual “Tiny Feet, Big Steps” African Neonatology Conference and writing a Neonatology Handbook, through which vital knowledge has been passed onto medical teams from over 25 countries.

Developing nutritional education programs in a Maasai school and health centers in the rural areas of Arusha.

Building and sustaining a rehabilitation program for severely malnourished children.

Treating so many Tanzanian children in clinic

While we are grateful for the financial gift of each congregation and individual, we have also enjoyed connecting personally with individual ELCA congregations. We’ve appreciated the opportunity to speak in your fellowship halls, enjoy meals with your outreach boards and in some cases, even stay in guest rooms in your houses! We also have taken great comfort knowing that you were lifting us up in prayer during your worship services.



A New Chapter

While we are ending our employment with the ELCA, we are continuing our work with infants, children and mothers in Arusha. We are not leaving Tanzania. We plan to continue on in the work we have been doing the past decade: training healthcare workers and fostering innovation in neonatology in ways that are specific to the African context.

In order to support and sustain this work, we have founded a non-profit organization called Institute for Child Healthcare Africa (ICHA). ALMC and ICHA are in discussions about how ICHA will assume operational and financial responsibility for running the Department of Pediatrics and the NICU at ALMC. ICHA is also developing the first free-standing specialty outpatient pediatric clinic in Tanzania. We have a Board in the USA and a local Tanzanian Board of Directors, and are registered as a 501(c)(3). This is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization.

ICHA will continue to host the annual “Tiny Feet, Big Steps” conferences. We are preparing for the arrival of doctors and nurses from nearly 120 different medical facilities and 25 countries this November at our 5th African Neonatology Conference in Arusha. We have been invited to expand the conferences into other African countries and early December we will be running a Tiny Feet, Big Steps conference in Ethiopia! Next year we are looking to bring the conference to Ghana and Uganda, and have teaching opportunities across the continent.



Further Partnership

The ELCA invites you to continue in financial and prayer partnership with other missionaries on their staff. We wish to encourage this!

Daudi and Kellen Msseemmaa have been working in East Africa since 2019 as East African Representatives. They are involved in some wonderful work, strengthening relationships between ELCA churches and the partners in East Africa. Daudi also serves on the leadership board for the church and clinic of the Lutheran Mission in South Sudan. They have founded Empowered Girls, which teaches life skills to girls and builds supportive environments for their education. You will find information on the ELCA Missionary Giving site and specify "Msseemmaa GCS 2058". They are wonderful ELCA mission colleagues and friends in Tanzania, and we admire their work. Please do invest in them!

We Remain in Relationship:

If you are interested in continuing to receive our newsletters, please let us know by replying to this email or emailing Jodi at jodiswanson@yahoo.com or Steve at stephen.swanson@ichafrika.org.

At the very least, if you have been supporting us in the past years, we ask that you continue to pray for us, our family and the work we have been doing. This transition has been quite taxing on our family and there is uncertainty ahead-- but we do know that Jesus walks alongside us. In all of these uncertainties, we sense His presence and His guidance.

If you would like more information about how you could continue to support the work at the NICU, the education of doctors and nurses and the conferences, we would be happy to discuss this with you. We know that how churches choose to use their funds, particularly around mission, often have clear guidelines. Again, we also do not wish for congregations to reduce their support to the ELCA.

Thank you for all the work we have done in the past years together. We have been humbled by God's faithfulness and the times and places, just when we thought hope was lost, that Jesus showed up to give us strength to carry on.

As we head into this next chapter, we hope and pray that we can continue to be in partnership together. Many thanks,

Steve and Jodi

BREAKING NEWS!!

One of our fantastic physicians-in-training is Dr. Godbless Philipppo. This past March, Godbless matched at the U of MN Pediatric Residency Program and is beginning his 3 years of training this July! His contribution to our NICU has been invaluable and he will be greatly missed. We are so excited for him as he begins a new chapter in his career and look forward to connecting with him in Minnesota. Below are some photos at his going away party in the NICU.





Kid's Korner - Final Episode

Jan 2014:
our first months in
Arusha....
we promised each child
their own dog if they moved
with us to Tanzania!
12 years later, they still
lovingly call Tanzania,
"home".



Many of you have followed our family through these years, and that doesn't mean just our work. You often ask us how the kids are doing, and we know you have also prayed for them. We feel we are coming to a new chapter as a family... usually referred to as "the empty nest." I prefer to call it "The Launching"!

They will no longer be a regular part of our daily life in Tanzania, so before we say goodbye to "Kid's Korner," here is a final update.

	Hannah has been in South Africa since early May conducting veterinary research through the U of Oregon on a project with cape buffalo. She also had the opportunity to work with a conservation team in Kruger National Park de-horning rhinos. She is ecstatic, loving her work in the bush and is definitely on the career path of a wildlife veterinarian.
	Caedmon is part of a co-op in computer engineering this year at Extreme Engineering Solutions in Madison, WI. He will begin his final year of university in January. He loves his studies and his extreme sports! His newest area of focus besides rock climbing is high lining above canyons. So, you can keep him FOREVER in your prayers. When he was born, I did not anticipate that safety was going to be part of my daily prayers for this one!



The last one to launch is Indya and she is soaring! She has spent a gap year in Vietnam, Minnesota, South Africa, and finally in France. Working on farms, hiking the Southern Alps, and practicing her French has filled these last two months. Indya will be attending Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR, this fall and will likely center her focus on Biology and Environmental Studies.



Institute for Child Healthcare Africa (ICHA) arises out of a decade of innovative pediatric and neonatology work, especially in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). It is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, and a registered international non-governmental organization (NGO). Care of hospitalized newborns and children, and training of doctors and nurses, is supported through your donations.

You can see more at: www.ichafrica.org



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

For more information and videos:

ichafrica.org

or

[Neonatology Africa](http://NeonatologyAfrica)

Funds are received through **Institute for Child Healthcare Africa** (www.ichafrica.org) or **Global Health Ministries** (<https://give.ghm.org/nicu>) are 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.

Our mailing address is:

Steve and Jodi Swanson
c/o Michael Swanson
16608 Early Dawn Trail
Lakeville, MN 55044