

Edgumbe Presbyterian Church

Midweek Update – May 16, 2018

SPIRIT!

This coming Sunday is Pentecost when we celebrate Jesus sending his Holy Spirit to be with us and love and guide us in every moment. It is one of our fun traditions to wear brightly colored clothes to church on this Sunday. Pentecost is also a time when the gospel went from Jerusalem into the whole world, so international-themed clothing is also appropriate. During worship, we will also celebrate two ordinations: Jay McGregor as Elder and Connie Howe-Vielmetti as Deacon.

BACKWOODS NEIGHBORS

One great thing about working in the backwoods more is that we are starting to meet a few of our neighbors. Julie has been talking to one neighbor this week who mentioned both his excitement about the meditative pathways and also his frustration with neighbors who spend their time arguing over property lines. Maybe our church has a new calling of being a healing and connective presence in our immediate neighborhood? This is worth praying about: *God, we pray for our neighbors and we hope that our backwoods project will be a place where friends and neighbors can find peace and connection with each other and with Edgumbe Church and with your Spirit!*

OFFICE MANAGER JOB CHANGE

When she started working here, Lois Glewwe told us that she would come out of retirement to fill in as our Office Manager for several months. That was four years ago. Lois is now ready (again) for less work and more retirement, so she is moving from three days per week to working just on Wednesday afternoons as we begin looking for a replacement. Lois has done a fantastic job of organizing the office and the church financial accounts, so we are extremely grateful for her service.

The Personnel team will be meeting this Sunday after church to evaluate the church's needs in the office and begin looking for a new person. If you have thoughts or ideas, please feel free to come to the meeting or contact Pastor Phil.

EGGERT TANZANIA UPDATE

Ron and Ingrid Eggert sent us an update of their work and life in Arusha on May 5, which I forgot to include last week. It is included as an attachment this week. Eggerts: we send our love and care to you today!

PRAYERS

- For Ron and Ingrid and their work and health in Arusha.
- For new church officers Connie and Jay, that God might bless them and their ministry and leadership.

- For Deb Carlson, who could not do her third round of chemo this week due to low white blood cell count, so postponed until next week. Gratitude that she is feeling better although tired.
- Ruth Anderson put in a prayer request for Brian, a 30-year-old in a wheelchair facing amputation of a leg.

For a beautiful spring day, we say Thank You, God! Pastor Phil

May 5, 2018 Ron



Well, we've been here in Arusha almost two months and have communicated little except for a few Facebook posts. So here is an update of sorts. Ingrid will follow below.

It is a treat and a privilege to be back at Selian full time, attending on the wards and helping in the outpatient clinic. This past month we've had two excellent interns on the medicine ward, Seth on the left in the photo and Eveline next to him. I see part of my job as making the medicine ward, teaching physical diagnosis, structuring

differential diagnosis and planning for patient care so interesting and exciting that our interns consider going into internal medicine residency. The reason is everyone seems to want to go into surgery, but Seth has taken the bait, although I think he was so inclined beforehand, and plans to go on in medicine. (Eveline wants to deliver babies.) The fellow with the full beard is Steve Selinski, an internal medicine resident from the Univ. of Minnesota. Steve was great, a good, challenging teacher for the interns, and to my left is Ambrosia, a medicine nurse who came to Selian when I did back in 2002.

Originally Selian was a church hospital, under the umbrella of the Lutheran Church of Tanzania with a lot of support from Lutheran churches in the States. In 2008 Selian, under financial pressure, became a partnership between the church and the government. The arrangement was uneasy for a number of reasons, so 2 years ago it reverted back to the church. The current physician administrator, Amon, is a former medical student/intern/registrar on the medical ward at Selian when I was first there in the early 00s. He is a good, transparent administrator, slowly upgrading our systems, hiring competent staff, promoting a real esprit de corps. Makes work fun! Incredibly, our outpatient department has entirely electronic medical records and the inpatient departments are beginning the transition to electronic too.



Our spectrum of patients still reflects the rural living of most of them. Living in small, poorly ventilated spaces promotes transmission of infectious diseases and TB is making a strong comeback in the immunocompetent and immunocompromised (AIDS) populations. The fellow whose x-ray is shown has miliary TB involving lungs, pericardium and liver and is not responding to first line drugs, so probably has multi-drug resistant TB. Getting second line anti-TB drugs is difficult.

We do not see as much AIDS-related opportunistic infections as in past years due largely to the USAID/PEPFAR (President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief) program introduced under George Bush. PEPFAR paid for diagnosis and treatment of AIDS for tens of thousands of people and Selian is/was a big provider under that program. Unfortunately the Obama

administration scaled the program back and set a timeline to phase it out by 2020. Various funds have stepped in to partly fill the gap but we are seeing an increase in the numbers of patients unable to afford/obtain proper diagnosis and medication. According to available public health data the number of infected persons in the 15-49 age group in Tanzania declined from around 20% to around 7% from 2001-2010. I think we will see an increase in coming years.

On the plus side we see much less malaria. I think this is due to the widespread use of treated bed nets and the increasing urbanization of Arusha which has paved over and otherwise eliminated many swampy areas where mosquitoes breed. Chronic lung disease is still common among Maasai women who cook over open fires in closed spaces, similar to smokers' lung disease in Western countries, although the women do not develop the lung cancers our smokers develop.

That's a too brief look at our medical wards. More in another update. Ingrid will add about Plaster House.

Ingrid:

I started at Plaster House after we got back from our wonderful safari. Fortunately Easter Monday is a holiday here, so I had a day to recover!! And I have been busy since! As we now live across the road from Plaster House in one of the new volunteer apartments, I go back in the afternoon after lunch, making for a full day! We moved into the apartment that first week, and it is very comfortable, and quite spacious. We even have an extra bedroom! Any takers??

The Plaster House expansion, which the director, Sarah Rejman, fundraised for last fall, is complete, with space for the older, more independent kids, and the moms who come with their young children for surgery. The 2 apartments are part of this expansion. And with more space came more kids. Right now there are 107 kids and 27 moms! Our class room averages between 25 and 40 kids, ranging from preschoolers to teenagers, kids who have had some school, some who are quite advanced in their education, and some, including teenagers who have never been to school. Consequently their daily work is quite individual. I have been working with the younger kids, and beginning students, and their daily work, as written in their notebooks, is different for each kid. So the beginning of the day, when the teachers arrive, is taken up by figuring out their assignments.



Asifiwe, the Tanzanian head teacher, is still there, as energetic and fun as ever. She now has an assistant, Naomi, who is quite competent, and I am the only volunteer! Quite a workload! In addition Asifiwe is on her annual four-week leave right now! One more week to go without her! (Ingrid, Asifiwe and a Plaster House patient in photo.)

The daily schedule is still about the same as when I volunteered here four years ago. The teachers get there about 8:30, and we prepare for the day. I get my teaching materials together for the lesson, we write their lessons in the notebooks, then it is time for “chai”, mid-morning sweet ginger tea, with lots of milk for the kids, and “factory” bread. It used to be home-made Tanzanian doughnuts, but with so many kids and moms it became impossible. Then the kids come into the classroom, called by a tambourine. We start with greetings, a short silent prayer, which all the kids are familiar with, and then usually a story. After that dismissal to their tables. I get to present the lesson (writing/reading or math), with lots of home-made materials and activities, which they really like. I often have them close their eyes when I distribute materials, and they love it! There are all at different levels, even at this table, so there is a lot of cooperative learning and helping going on.



We have class until lunch time, or until they have finished their “written” (notebook) work, when they are free to choose another activity, or ask for more work, which happens a lot! I am able to go home for lunch, and relax for a little while. The afternoons are less structured, with activities to choose from, such as memory games, puzzles, coloring, books, and always popular Legos! They build quite

amazing structures, especially when there are several kids building together! And some kids continue to work on their notebooks! The teachers quit about 4 o’clock, with transportation to town available then, so I also go home!



I have been sorting through the materials in the classroom, to the point of bringing puzzles home to figure out whether they are complete! Some of my old teaching materials are still around, although not quite in the old order, but there is always some new stuff to make in order to share with the kids! Which I do at home.

Two weeks ago Plaster House celebrated its 10th anniversary with a party for staff, volunteers and the kids, a big all-afternoon event, to see the photos, taken by Ron, go to:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wfinzrcvy68293j/AABFs1eExg563s71v4JfKy8ma?dl=0>

On another note, it is still raining here, a very extended rainy season! There are two consequences: little sunshine results in cold inside temperatures, and the roads are getting worse and worse, with rocks exposed, huge gullies, muddy spots, etc. On the days there is sunshine, I quickly open the windows on the sunny side to let in the warmth. It does make a difference.

More about daily life at Plaster House, and at our house next time! Maybe we will be a little speedier with our next update...



